



# GEORGIAN PORTRAITS

*By the same Author*

MELBA : AN UNCONVENTIONAL BIOGRAPHY  
VICTORIAN PORTRAITS  
THE STRANGE HISTORY OF  
LORD GEORGE GORDON  
Etc. Etc.







PORTRAIT SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR  
by Reginald Eves

# GEORGIAN PORTRAITS

*by*

PERCY COLSON



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TO  
MY TWO BEST FRIENDS  
JOAN BEVAN  
AND  
WILLIE B. MORRIS



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author wishes to point out that the writers of the Forewords are not in any way responsible for the views expressed in the Essays.

*London, S.W., 1938.*



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SIR JAMES JEANS



SIR JAMES JEANS

## SIR JAMES JEANS

*Introduced by Sir Richard Gregory, Bt., F.R.S.  
Editor of "Nature"*

IT is very rarely that capacity for creative work in science is combined with the art of brilliant literary expression, yet in Sir James Jeans they are represented to a supreme degree, and we have the unusual association of the two qualities referred to in William Watson's beautiful verse :

" Science and Art, compeers in glory,  
Boast each a haunt divine,  
' My place is in God's laboratory ' :  
' And in His garden, mine. ' "

Sir James Jeans does not, however, owe his high position in the scientific world to experimental work in the laboratory or observational work in the observatory, but to the use of his mathematical genius to co-ordinate results obtained in fields of research of physics and astronomy and derive fundamental principles from them. His contribution to the dynamical theory of gases and the mathematical theory of electricity and magnetism, and his substantial studies of problems of cosmogony and stellar dynamics, were given scientific recognition by his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1906 and the award of the Royal Medal of the Society in 1919. He became Secretary of the Society in the latter year and occupied this office for ten years, throughout

this period devoting voluntary service to its interests and those of science generally.

Sir James had for some years occupied a leading position among his scientific colleagues before he turned his genius towards the exposition of science to the thoughtful section of the general public. His ability to do such interpretation successfully was first shown in one or two addresses which, when published, were widely read and appreciated. Now no man of science living is better known than he is to meditative readers—both scientific and lay—through his brilliant expositions of complicated physical and mathematical conceptions. These rare qualities have enabled him to open up new realms of thought and inquiry to philosophers as well as experimentalists, and also to interest laymen in the development of ideas relating to the Universe. They involve explanations of Relativity, quantum and wave mechanics, and other novel aspects of cosmogony and their philosophical implications. In literary style and scientific substance these works are among the best of their type ever produced; and their widespread circulation is a gratifying sign of public interest in intricate scientific subjects when made intelligible by artistic expression.

## SIR JAMES JEANS

“Trace Science then, with Modesty thy guide.”—POPE.

**I** SOMETIMES think that *La Comédie Humaine* would be far more amusing if we still dressed the parts we play in it. How interesting it must have been to walk abroad when the nobles strutted about in all the bravery of their satin and velvet doublets, their plumed hats and clanking swords ; when apprentices wore breeches and leather aprons ; jesters their cap and bells, and picturesquely garbed monks—Franciscans, Dominicans and Servites—hurried along the medieval streets. Astrologers, too, the ancient predecessors of our astronomers, could be recognized by their long black gowns and pointed sugar-loaf hats. They were held in high esteem. In the days when in Dublin the heads of traitors were impaled on stakes on the highest point of the castle, the poet Derrick wrote :

“His head is poled high  
Upon the castle here,  
Beholding stars, as if he were  
A great Astronomer.”

It would puzzle the most astute psychologist to tell the profession of the subject of my sketch from his appearance, and yet you could not talk to Sir James Jeans for five minutes without discovering that you were in the presence of a very unusual personality. Notwithstanding his quiet modest manner he speaks as one “having authority” and there is that touch of aloofness



which is natural in a man whose mind dwells much in the realms of the Infinite. Perhaps if you *were* to hazard a guess as to his calling you would put him down as holding some such dignity as that of Provost of Eton, or as Master of an Oxford College. And he might well have held a similar position, for besides being a mathematician he is a classical scholar. Then, too, he is something of a poet and musician—he plays the organ well—and his place as one of the giants of astronomy and science is secure. One of his most distinguished colleagues once said to me: “Jeans has without question one of the greatest minds in Europe.” It is difficult to say in which of the various fields of knowledge in which he shines he most fully reveals himself.

It was in 1929 that Sir James published his book, *The Universe Around Us* which at once—may I say surprisingly?—became a best-seller. Surprisingly, because the general public had never before taken a book on such a subject to its heart. It is even doubtful whether the average “gentle reader” could define accurately the word *science*, if asked to do so off hand—science which, expressed simply, merely means orderly thinking: “the pursuit of systematic and formulated knowledge,” as the Oxford Dictionary begins its exposition of the term. But if, as I have said, no book on astronomy had previously rivalled a popular thriller, no book had ever described the wonders of the universe in so lucid and fascinating a manner, with such literary charm and wealth of poetic imagery. We know that the born scientist put his heart and soul into science. Sir James has done more than that: he has taken science into his heart and soul; his human, artist’s soul, and of his charity he has shared it with us. His explanation of the tremendous unseen, and the irresistible spell it exercises upon his readers, is due to the simple fact that he has

*humanized* science and, curiously enough, those most superhuman sciences—astronomy and mathematical physics.

What is the position of life, above all, human life in the vast universe? How do these terrifying facts and obscure theories affect us? Is life an accident, or “is it a normal event for inanimate matter to produce life in due course when the physical environment is suitable?”

Apart from the certain knowledge that it exists on earth, we have no definite evidence about it, except that at the best, only an infinitesimally small corner of the universe can be in the least suited to support human beings.

But however accidental or unimportant life may be, it is *our* life: all we have, and anything that can help us to understand it a little before we go hence and are no more seen, is of incalculable moment to us. Sir James recognizes this: the subject constantly preoccupies him and he returns to it again and again in his writings.

Among the rank and file of the scientific world there are not wanting those to whom the fact that Sir James has written books to popularize those most enigmatic and sacred natural sciences, astronomy and modern physics, is almost an offence; a sin against the Holy Spirit of science. And not just *one* book—that might have been excused as a mental lapse—but several! Books which adorn the bookshelves of every self-respecting household and which fill their innumerable readers with delight. Perhaps in the subconscious minds of his critics the knowledge that his readers *are* innumerable adds to the offence; it is so difficult to forgive success. It is rather amusing to those who can read between the lines to detect the faint touch of condescension displayed by some of Sir James’s scientific reviewers, mingled with the admiration they cannot help admitting for

the masterly way in which he deals with the thorny subjects of which he treats. They would rather that he were less brilliant. Astronomy, they say, is not the subject for a thriller. And Sir James, supremely indifferent to their griefs, has answered them with delightful lightness by confessing that : " happily astronomy is a science . . . about which one could hardly be prosaic if one tried " !

The question as to whether it is permissible to popularize scientific results, or whether, even, science *can* be made accessible to the man in the street without violating her supreme right of splendid isolation and depriving her of her very essence, is both highly controversial and of great importance. It is no longer a secret among modern philosophers that there is a very close, and one can say with truth, *vital* relationship between science and common sense ; the common-sense or simple view of the world which is the mother soil from which science emerged ;<sup>1</sup> the soil in which it has its roots and the soil from which it obtained, obtains and always will obtain its stimuli and incentives. Whenever in its history it has lost this vitalizing contact it has deteriorated and lost touch with humanity. Science is in its very essence nothing but a careful elaboration of this original view of the world, made possible, supported and sustained by the progress of our technical civilization. The task of science is just the answering of the anxious questions as to what is the nature of this world into which we have been thrown by mysterious fate, and supplying us, trembling and audacious manikins, with the means of conquering the hostile forces of Nature and making them serve us.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, a rather clumsy translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*, a term much used in German philosophy and for which the English language has no adequate equivalent.

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Huxley defined science as " organized common sense."

Thus the trend of modern science to stress and intensify its pseudo "splendid isolation" limits its usefulness. The principle, Science for Science's Sake, implies much the same fallacy as the Art for Art's Sake, beloved at the close of the nineteenth century. Hence he who popularizes science, particularly astronomy, which was originally studied for utilitarian purposes, only returns to common sense. He pays off old debts. And apart from this, science has a higher mission. Nowadays we no longer listen to the voice of the Eternal or try to glimpse its meaning. We are again worshipping the Golden Calf. Men like Sir James bring down the message from Mount Sinai and try to make us understand.

Modern astronomy is only about three hundred years old; its story has been often told but it can never lose its fascination, at least when told as Sir James tells it. The Greeks, Pythagoras who was born about 570 B.C. and Aristarchus of Samos, the greatest Greek mathematician, had anticipated some of the modern ideas. But Pythagoras, while thinking that the earth was a globe floating in space, did not suspect that it revolved under the stars. He imagined that it stood at rest in the centre of the universe and that the stars turned round it from east to west. Another Greek, Heraclides, about 388-315 B.C., was the first to state that it was the earth that turned and so gave men the impression that the heavenly bodies were moving across the sky.

Like so much of the wisdom of the Greeks, this tide of knowledge receded, for their own philosopher, Aristotle, contradicted the early astronomers. For many centuries, all through the Dark Ages, and in medieval times most men thought that the earth was a flat plane. Above, somewhere beyond the clouds, was heaven, and deep down underneath

their feet was hell ; an uncomfortable fiery furnace which was taken as a concrete fact by the people in general. An inhabitant of Sienna in the thirteenth century would not have been in the least astonished had the earth opened and a horned demon emerged to drag down some notorious evil-doer to the burning lake.

It was in the thirteenth century that the Somersetshire monk, Roger Bacon, asserted that an instrument could be made which would bring the stars "as near as you pleased." Some two hundred years later the Polish astronomer, Copernicus, explained the tracks of the planets across the sky by supposing that they and the earth moved round a fixed central sun. Not until 1608 did the dream instrument of Roger Bacon—who, by the way, invented spectacles—become a reality and a telescope was made by a Flemish spectacle-maker named Lippershey. This invention intensely interested Galileo Galilei, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Padua. He studied the principles on which it had been constructed and soon made himself a better and infinitely more powerful one. It created an immense sensation in Italy. Venice, Sir James tells us, had seen aged senators climbing to the highest bell-towers to look at ships far out at sea, and Galileo claimed that it showed objects fifty miles distant as though they were only five miles away. Galileo then turned his telescope on to the Milky Way and all the fables and superstitions regarding it faded into thin air ; he looked at the moon and saw upon it mountains and valleys and what seemed to be seas, indeed a world like our own ; at Jupiter, Venus and Mercury, and they lost their supernatural significance. But the Church was all-powerful and it forced him publicly to abjure his theories. Sir James tells us that well into the eighteenth century the University of Paris taught that

the motion of the earth round the sun was a "convenient but *false* hypothesis," and the American universities taught the ancient astronomy and that of Copernicus and Galileo as if both were equally tenable. The date 7th January 1610, however, proved a death-blow to the old theology and ushered in a new epoch for humanity.

The new theories upset not only the Church ; man's vanity received a terrible shock. He had been taught to consider himself one of the lords of creation, and the earth, his abode, as the centre of the universe around which revolved all the other heavenly bodies. It was unbearable to be asked to believe that the "centre of the universe" was an infinitesimal speck spinning dizzily around a sun which itself was only one and by no means one of the most important—of countless millions of other suns, set in space so inconceivably vast and at distances so inconceivably great that his mind was utterly incapable of apprehending them. And the friendly little stars that guided his steps by night—fiery studs nailed in the crystal floor of heaven or holes in the sky through which shone celestial light—could the telescope be telling the truth :

Science still upsets our notions concerning the universe and the part—if any—that we play in it. And, as Sir James is careful to tell us, it is constantly upsetting and revising its own theories, for its one preoccupation is the search for truth. But it has plenty of time before it :

"When you and I beyond the Veil are past,  
Oh ! but the long, long while the World shall last."

Let us try to gather as clearly as we can a general idea of the conclusions of Sir James "about it and about."

As we inquire into the technique of his researches we are

first of all amazed at his genius for making the unimaginable imaginable. He achieves it by the most striking similes. Thus, for instance, he had the delightful audacity to begin his address to the Royal Astronomical Society on the occasion of its Gold Medal being awarded to Albert Einstein, by telling the story of two children who played truant and wandered away in search of the elusive land where the rainbow ends. Footsore and weary they sat down to rest and suddenly a magician approached. Oh ! not at all a conventional magician with a long black robe and a flowing white beard ; just a young man of some twenty-seven years old, simple, kind and unassuming.

"Tell us," they asked, "where the rainbow ends."

The magician sat down beside them and in language any child could understand explained the rainbow to them. What he said in brief was this :

"I can tell you what is the matter. You have started to chase the rainbow on the supposition that it is a material arch ; in actual fact it is all in your own eyes. Gretchen sees one rainbow and Hans sees a quite different one. But if Hans walks up to where Gretchen is standing, he simply changes his rainbow for hers ; you don't get any nearer to a rainbow by walking this distance because there isn't really any rainbow for you to get any nearer to. The angle you have been measuring must always stay at  $42^{\circ} 23'$  ; it is fixed there by the unalterable laws of nature, and children cannot alter these by walking about."

As the children were tired, and the young magician had perhaps expressed himself in rather unfamiliar ways, they did not at first quite understand what he meant. But then another magician, whose name was Minkowski, came along, and he made it all seem much simpler ; he said it was quite true that each child carried its own rainbow about with it, but that behind

the subjective vision of the rainbow was an objective reality consisting of a shower of raindrops. These raindrops were the same for everybody, but out of the whole lot each person's eye selected, or rather the sunshine selected for each person's eye a small group of drops which appeared to him to form a bright arch. If all space were filled with children standing in different spots, then the aggregate of all the raindrops seen in all the children's eyes would constitute the reality behind the whole phenomenon, a shower of rain. When the second magician put things this way the children began to understand ; they saw that the first magician, whose name was Einstein, had been right.

When Sir James had finished this charming prelude, he apologized gracefully for the "disrespectful way" in which he had introduced the famous medallist. "If I have seemed to treat Einstein's great early work too lightly," he said, "I would plead firstly that it has already had sufficient serious exposition and secondly that only really good work permits of being treated lightly and it is well to take a chance when it offers itself." We wonder whether all the learned fellows of the Society were receptive enough to appreciate the charm of this address. Those of us, however, who are less learned and more susceptible will agree that only a really great man, sure of his complete command of his subject and a lord of language could notice such a chance—and take it.

Instances of the extraordinary ability of Sir James to turn the abstract into the concrete are legion. He speaks of the number  $10^{420000000}$ , and makes that mathematical monstrosity understandable by saying, "Failing our convenient mathematical shorthand, this number could be represented by an "1" followed by six million volumes similar to the present,



all full of "o's." Now we know where we are ! Again, wishing to give us an imaginable idea of the masses of matter in the universe and of the relationship of our infinitesimal earth to these masses, he says, " Any one of the photographs reproduced in this book would have to be enlarged so as to cover Asia before a body the size of the earth became visible in it at all, even under the most powerful of microscopes." Then, too, in order to give us an idea of the number of stars visible through the 100-inch telescope in the Galactic system alone, he tells us it is equal to the total number of men, women and children in the world : enough to enable each inhabitant of the globe " to choose his own particular guiding star."

The difficulty of putting scientific problems and results into language that can be understood by people of average education is greatly underrated. In the case of modern physics and astronomy these difficulties are, perhaps, insurmountable. This not only because these subjects are so difficult and complicated, but for the more essential reason that they have to a great extent lost contact with what we call reality in the ordinary sense. Tangible and, in a way, solid reality has given way to abstruse and problematical conceptions quite unimaginable and inconceivable to the ordinary mind. The modern physicist lives in a remote world of his own. And the puzzling fact is that all the picture swchich science now draws of Nature are mathematical pictures, so that, as Sir James tells us, " No one except a mathematician need ever hope fully to understand those branches of science which try to unravel the nature of the universe." There are those who characterize such statements as scientific arrogance and assert that there is nothing which is that cannot be explained in ordinary language. They are wrong. One might use music as an analogy. Who can explain

the mystery of its spell except in notes : " Language," Sir James tells us, " can only describe experiences which men have in common, so we cannot explain external things except in the *a priori* event of these proving to be of the same nature as something with which our knowing minds are familiar."

If any one could make clear these cryptic problems it is Sir James, but, as we have seen, he never minimizes the difficulties of his subject. I think it was Lord Kelvin who said, " When you double the known you quadruple the unknown." Sir James confirms this dictum. " The advance of knowledge," he says, " seems to be reduced to what Einstein has described as extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible"—an art which St. Athanasius discovered long ago ! And again, " The findings of modern science are a description, not of Nature but of human understanding of Nature." And yet again, " What is reality ? It is the more fascinating as we can never have certain knowledge of reality, but there remains the question of probabilities, and at best we can only deal in probabilities." " Trying to explain reality," says Sir James, " whether to ourselves or to another, would be like trying to explain a wireless outfit to a savage. . . . The external world has proved to be farther removed from the familiar concepts of everyday life than nineteenth-century science had anticipated."

It is extraordinary how science has changed the aspect of our daily lives during the last fifty years. I am not yet a septuagenarian, but I can remember when a little boy being taken to see the marvel of Liverpool Street Station lighted by the new electric-light ; the telephone coming into general use ; the introduction of the open gas-fire, motor cars and wireless telegraphy, and of course broadcasting and television, which are things of yesterday. How much more has life changed

during the few thousand years of which we have written history ! But nothing that has ever happened can be compared with the cataclysm, the tremendous upheaval which has shattered to atoms our former conception of the universe and built up a new one more majestic and gigantic than anything the mind of man had conceived. And, curiously enough, few people seem to realize what has happened. We are living in a materialistic age and of late years we have been so fed on miracles that to some extent they have lost the power to astonish. No new discovery, however incredible and miraculous, arouses the controversy which was excited by Darwin when he published his *Origin of Species*.

The man who caused this cataclysm, Sir James tells us, was Einstein with his theory of Relativity, enunciated in those red-letter years in the *World of Science*, 1905-1915. A distinguished body of physicists led by the famous triumvirate, Einstein, Minkowski and Weyl, have created a new conception of the universe which has not only replaced the former one but has reached heights never attained in the past. And this is what has happened.

What, one imagines, could possibly be more solid than matter : the matter from which we, the furniture of our rooms, the houses in which we live, mountains, stars and such things are formed : "You are quite wrong," the scientists told us. "Matter is not solid at all ; it consists only of waves." What, too, we thought, could be more utterly different from matter than light ? "Wrong again," said the scientists, "light also consists of waves, as, indeed, does the whole material universe. There are, of course, two kinds of waves : one we call Matter and the other Radiation or Light ; thus the universe is resolved into a world of light." The story of creation, Sir James tells us,

is told with perfect accuracy in the words: "And God said, 'Let there be Light.'"

All our ideas about time and space are now proved to have been wrong. From time immemorial they have been regarded as the pillars of the framework in which *La Comédie Humaine* is acted. Alas! time and space, says Sir James, are one and the same—so thoroughly welded together that it is impossible to detect any traces of a join. All the so-called natural forces, including the most familiar of them, Gravitation, have been unmasked as frauds—they simply do not exist. Dynamics, too, disappear from science. The mechanism of the whole universe is transformed and the laws of Nature have become those of Geometry only.

Probably the most important change for ordinary people in the scientific outlook is that the law of *Causality* has lost its universal meaning in the view of modern physics. This law states that a given cause invariably produces the same effect, so that what happens at any instant is inevitably the result of the state of things at the preceding instant. Thus the entire course of events since the beginning of the world was determined by the state in which the world found itself at the first moment of its history. Once this state has been fixed, Nature could move only along one fixed road to a predestined end. The establishment of this law as first guiding principle of existence was the scientific triumph of the seventeenth century. The scientists of the twentieth century are busily engaged in depriving it of most of its significance. As a result of their investigations more and more facts have been discovered which can be explained only by the assumption that there exists in all probability some factor or force at present unknown to science, operating in Nature to neutralize the cast-iron inevitability of the law of causation.

For this unknown factor we have no name unless it be God, or Fate.

This is, perhaps, the most heartening vista which modern physics opens to the mind of humanity. Mankind has always rebelled against the dreary, hopeless doctrine of predestination. We like to think that we have at least *some* degree of free-will ; that even though we cannot remould this sorry scheme of things entirely to our heart's desire, we can still guide and control our actions, and change the course of events in which we play our little part to even a slight extent, just because we exist. This belief is innate in human nature and so strong that even Christian theology has always been obliged to take it into account. In answer to the old, old question, "How is it that sin and sorrow can exist if God who is all good and who only wills the good is really all powerful?" the Church replies, "There is a certain amount of freedom given to mankind to enable him to choose between good and evil." This sounds not unlike the conclusions of modern physicists who, says Sir James, agree that "there is room in the universe for something besides predestined forces."

And this is where life, animal and human, arrives on the scene. An empty space, finite, expanding itself, and curved—that is the picture which modern science has drawn of the universe into which life has stumbled, if not exactly by mistake at any rate as the result of what may rightly be described as an accident. "Standing on our own microscopic fragment of a grain of sand," Sir James says, "we try to discover the nature and purpose of the universe which surrounds our home in space and time. Our first impression is one something akin to terror. We find the universe terrifying because of its vast meaningless distances, terrifying because of its inconceivably

long vistas of time, which dwarf human history to the twinkling of an eye, terrifying because of our extreme loneliness and because of the material insignificance of our home in space—a millionth part of a grain of sand out of all the sea-sand in the world. And above all else we find the universe terrifying because it appears to be indifferent to life like our own : emotions, ambitions and achievement, art and religion all seem equally foreign to its plan. Perhaps, indeed, we ought to say it appears to be actively hostile to human life.” Happily the modern conception of the universe helps to allay the terror which is inspired in us by these ghastly voids, so icy cold that they would freeze terrestrial life out of existence, and sparsely inhabited by matter so hot that it would in an instant be scorched to death.

In the traditional science up to the end of the nineteenth century where matter *was* matter, energy—energy, radiation—radiation ; where forces moved matter, which matter retaliated by resisting forces, and where everything was tangible, concrete, solid and familiar, there was as little room for life *as* life, for human emotions, ambitions and aspirations as there is apparently in the terrifying universe Sir James unfolds before us. All these were but visions, illusions, dreams of poor ignorant vainglorious humanity, governed *nolens volens* by the inexorable law of Causality. Modern science has destroyed all this concrete world and turned it into a mathematical abstraction, a thought in the mind of the Architect of the universe. But it has given us in exchange a certain measure of dignity by telling us that freedom, our proudest boast, is one of the essential laws of the new creation.

And it has done more than that for us. When we consider how infinitesimal is our earth in comparison with the vast universe, how accidental are we, who, so far as we know, are

the only thinking beings in all space, we are apt to feel that our attempts to explore it are both presumptuous and futile. But, says Sir James, "Nature seems very conversant with the rules of mathematics as our mathematicians have formulated them from their studies and out of their own inner consciousness, without drawing to any appreciable extent on their experience of the outer world." And this discovery that the laws of the human mind comply so thoroughly with the laws of the universe is surely one of profound significance leading into deep waters? Sir James, however, is not afraid of deep waters, for the floods do not go over him.

"The real essence of substances," says Locke, "is forever unknowable, and a mathematical formula can never tell us what a thing is but only how it behaves," and that, says Sir James, is the only thing in which science is interested. When a modern scientist speaks of reality or of "ultimate Reality" this is what he means, and for him it exists only in a mathematical formula. And as mathematical formulæ are in the strictest sense of the word pure thoughts, for Sir James the universe is one of pure thought and creation an act of thought. It shows evidence, he thinks, of a designing, controlling power which has something in common with our individual minds, that is, to think in the manner which we describe as mathematical. From the intrinsic evidence of Creation the Creator would seem, says Sir James, to be a pure mathematician.

Deep waters, indeed! But any one who is interested in science or philosophy must admit to the scientist of high standing the right Sir James claims "to draw his own conclusions from the facts presented to modern science and to interpret them in his own way."

Such, roughly and entirely inadequately summarized, are a few of the conclusions at which Sir James and his scientific brethren have arrived: tentative conclusions for, as he tells us, to study science is like rowing along a winding stream—you never know where the next bend may lead you; perhaps only to a backwater. I have not attempted to touch on Sir James's own valuable contributions to the store of knowledge; their very names appal me! He was awarded the Royal Medal for successfully attacking "some of the most difficult problems in mathematical physics and astronomy." But I do not exercise myself in great matters which are too high for me, and when it is a question of "improving the theory of viscosity in the kinetic gases" or "the problem of the stability of the pear-shaped form of a rotating liquid mass" let all mortal (non-scientific) flesh keep silence!

Nor, again, have I spoken of the delightful way in which Sir James deals with the stars in their courses. After his lectures to the young at the Royal Institution, embodied in his book, *Through Time and Space*, children must smile contemptuously at the old nursery rhyme:

"Twinkle, twinkle little star,  
How I wonder what you are."

You cannot read Sir James's works without being charmed by his gift for the phrase, the scientific epigram. Trying to observe the inner workings of an atom, he tells us, is like "plucking off the wings of a butterfly to see how it flies, or taking poison to discover the consequences."

"It would be a dull mind that could see the rich variety of natural phenomena without wondering how they are inter-related."



“ Space means nothing apart from our perception of objects and time means nothing apart from our perception of events.”

He brings the moon nearer to us by saying that if we could take a journey in a rocket capable of travelling at the rate of seven miles a second, we should reach it in two days ! And he gives us an idea of the age of the earth by telling us to “ take a postage-stamp and stick it on to a penny. Now climb Cleopatra’s Needle and lay the penny flat, postage-stamp uppermost, on top of the obelisk. The height of the whole structure may be taken to represent the time that has elapsed since the earth was born. On this scale the thickness of the penny and postage-stamp together represents the time that man has lived on earth. The thickness of the postage-stamp represents the time he has been civilized, the thickness of the penny representing the time he has lived in an uncivilized state. Now stick another postage-stamp on top of the first to represent the next 10,000 years of civilization and go on sticking postage-stamps until you have a pile as high as Mont Blanc. Even now the pile forms an inadequate representation of the length of the future which, so far as astronomy can see, probably stretches before civilized humanity unless an accident cuts it short.”

But even so, just as the longest day comes at last to an end, those countless millions of days will pass, leaving this abode of our hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, loves and hates, a desolate frozen waste in which all life has ceased to exist and then, as Dr. Inge wrote, “ Who can measure the duration of the sleep of dead worlds, in cold and darkness, till a new cycle begins for them ? ”

Sir James offers no theories as to the meaning of life ; he has discovered no Elysian Fields in which, if we have passed our probation with honours, we may hope to spend eternity.

Those questions, he says, are not for the scientist, indeed, " We can still only guess at the meaning of this rare phenomenon, life. Is it the final climax towards which all creation moves ? A climax prepared by millions and millions of years of transformation of matter in uninhabited stars and nebulae and of the waste of radiation in desert space ? Or is it a merely accidental and quite unimportant by-product of natural forces which are working to another and stupendous end ? "

Sir James himself has the calm detached attitude of the scientist with regard to the terrifying mysteries of the universe that, like eternity, tease us out of thought. Happy in his delightful home, his two beautiful organs, his charming young wife, herself a brilliant organist, and that blue-eyed laughing little boy, he goes calmly on his way, content to enjoy the—

" Moment's halt, the momentary taste  
Of water from the well amid the waste."

I cannot conclude more fitly than by quoting the beautiful passage with which *The Universe Around Us* ends.

"Looked at in terms of space, the message of astronomy is at its best one of melancholy grandeur and oppressive vastness. Looked at in terms of time it becomes one of almost endless possibility and hope. As denizens of the universe we may be living near its end rather than its beginning ; for it appears likely that most of the universe had melted into radiation before we appeared on the scene. But as inhabitants of the earth we are living at the very beginning of time. We have come into being in the fresh glory of the dawn, and a day of almost unthinkable length stretches before us with unimaginable opportunities for accomplishment. Our descendants of far-off ages, looking down this long vista of time from the other end, will

## GEORGIAN PORTRAITS

see our present age as the misty morning of the world's history ; our contemporaries of to-day will appear as dim heroic figures who fought their way through jungles of ignorance, error and superstition to discover truth, to learn how to harness the forces of Nature, and to make a world worthy for mankind to live in. We are still too much engulfed in the greyness of the morning mists to be able to imagine, however vaguely, how this world will appear to those who come after us and see it in the full light of day. But by what light we have, we seem to discern that the main message is one of hope to the race and responsibility to the individual—of responsibility, because we are drawing plans and laying foundations for a longer future than we can well imagine."

MR. H. G. WELLS



MR. H. G. WELLS

## MR. WELLS THROUGH THE WRONG END OF THE TELESCOPE

*Introduced by Douglas Jerrold*

MR. WELLS is the representative figure of the world of my adolescence. He is the self-sufficient man whom Christ came to save, and Hitler to destroy. Instead he survives, and it looks at the moment as if he might outlive the society which he has disintegrated. This is Mr. Wells, seen through the wrong end of the telescope. I have assumed, you see, that for the purpose of examining Mr. Wells, the right end of the telescope is the one that magnifies. Mr. Colson, with more subtle flattery, has employed the other end, with the result that Mr. Wells almost disappears under his reducing glance. That is hardly fair to Mr. Wells, or to the earnest millions of young men and women all over the world who listened to him as a prophet in the first ten years of this century. Mr. Wells broke some windows, destroyed a lot of cobwebs, and let in some much-needed sunlight. His tragedy was that Mr. Wells was pre-eminently a child of the cobweb age, nourished on the gloom of improving books, irrelevant statistics, and the grand heresy of the automatic progress, and in the brighter world for which he is so largely responsible, he finds himself quite unable to see. It is just there that we who are younger have the advantage of Mr. Wells, and, therefore, the duty of some gratitude.

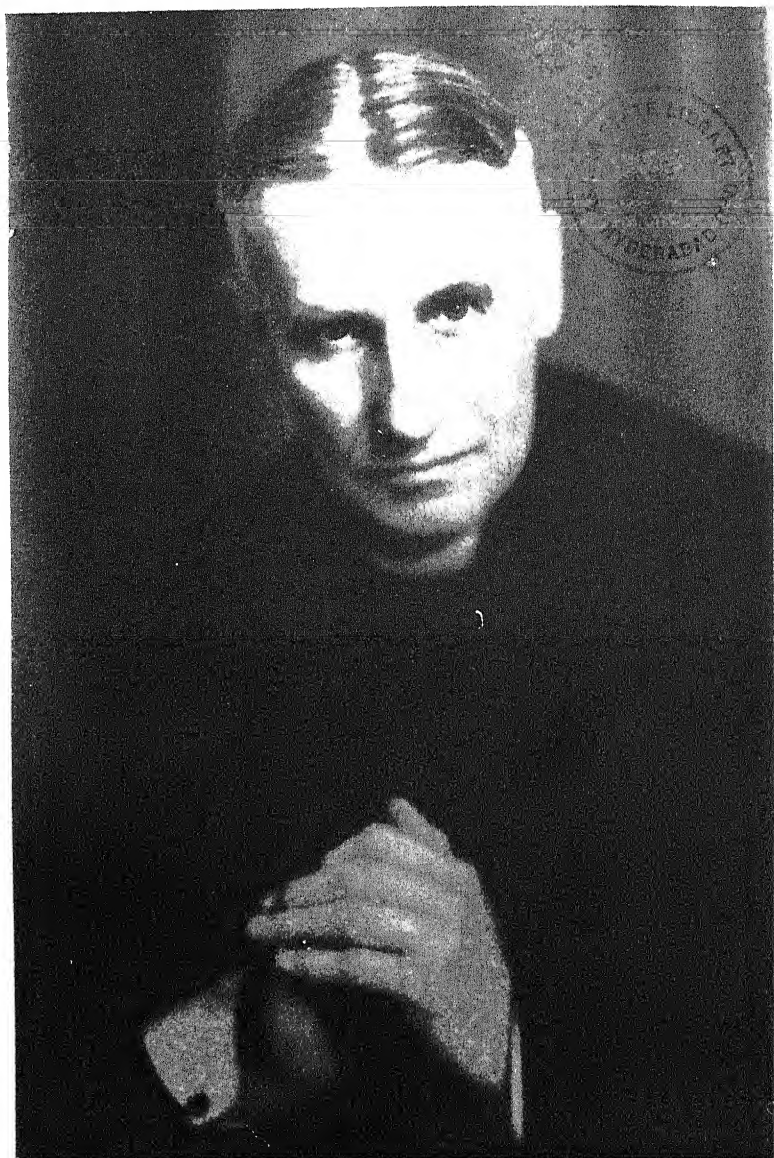
If you wish to know what Mr. Wells destroyed, read *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. If you wish to know what happened as a result (to readers of novels) read the terrible description of a Bloomsbury party in Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge's *Winter in Moscow*. Mr. Wells realized that the Victorian middle class, propped up by conventions, immunized by wealth, and flattered by security, was losing its creative power. The same men, unsupported by the conventions which Mr. Wells the novelist has destroyed, made restless by the poverty and insecurity which Mr. Wells the politician has done so much to create, and taught to be self-sufficient without God by Mr. Wells the philosopher, have degenerated into something so near anti-Christ that my doubts as to whether our society can outlive Mr. Wells have the soundest theological basis.

Yet the greatest tragedy of all, perhaps, is unobserved by Mr. Colson. The greatest tragedy is not that of Mr. Wells's religion or Mr. Wells's politics, but of Mr. Wells's history. For without Mr. Wells's history, as much of Mr. Wells's dogmatic atheism and socialistic planning as survived the war would certainly have perished in what Mr. Wyndham Lew so appropriately calls "the post-war." But Mr. Wells's history came to the rescue of thousands of restless idiots and sent them to school again with a fairy-tale in their ears.

What Mr. Wells describes as "King and country stuff" in one of his more urbane epigrams is, as he says, certainly dead. Mr. Wells has enjoyed a reputation as a seer for forty years by pronouncing a funeral oration on everything he sees around him, and it follows that, occasionally, Mr. Wells has pronounced a funeral oration over a corpse. But Mr. Wells put in place of the King and Country stuff his Caveman to Superman stuff, which was only not dead because it had never been alive. It

# THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM





THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM (Dr. Barnes

## THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM

### *Scientific Theory and Religion*

"The religion which is to guide and fulfil the present and coming ages, whatever else it be, must be intellectual."—DR. BARNES.

WHEN during the war Dr. Barnes, who was then Assistant-Lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge, was the target for ill-natured criticism, the steward of the kitchen said to him one day : " They criticize you a good deal, sir. Will you let me give you a word of advice ? Go on saying just what you think. When they stop criticizing you, you will know you are going wrong."

He took that excellent advice and has continued to say what he thinks regardless of his critics, clerical or otherwise. Outside the Church he is reviled chiefly because he is a convinced Pacifist. The Church accuses him of being an extreme modernist, an iconoclast ; calls him intolerant, especially towards Anglo-Catholics, and resents his ill-concealed contempt for the non-scientific point of view. In these days when the menace of war is again distracting the world and Christianity seems powerless to avert it—let us say, rather, the Churches, for though it is perhaps a platitude to say so, Christianity has never been really tried—it will, perhaps, be not without interest to acquaint ourselves with the views of this great Christian and brilliant mathematician and scientist, whose intellect is undoubtedly one of the most powerful in England, or anywhere else.

The subject of Pacifism is a thorny one. The seemingly high state of civilization of which we boasted ourselves before the year 1914 is crumbling in every direction and Europe, fast relapsing into barbarism, cries for war at any price. Most of the leaders of the Churches are foundering in a hopeless morass of muddled thinking, due to a vain endeavour to reconcile killing and Christianity. Neither Pacifists nor Militarists can suggest a way out of the impasse, but all thinking persons agree that only a return to a more spiritual view of personal and national problems—in a word, to the ethics of Christ—can save the world from catastrophe. Unfortunately, however, few of them have the courage of their convictions. We have to choose either to join in the mad race for armaments—to beggar ourselves, incidentally, in the process—or to be annexed by one or other of our more unscrupulous neighbours.

“I am an extreme Pacifist,” says Dr. Barnes. “My conversion dates to the latter part of August 1914. The war had broken out and men had flocked to the colours, and a camp had been established in Cambridge where I was then a Don.

“I was asked to speak to some of those men on a Sunday morning. I accepted without hesitation, and then began to write out my address. I wrote it once, then I went back to Christ’s teaching, and tore it up. I did the same a second and third time, and then I ventured an address which seemed to me ludicrously inadequate.

“I still have that address, but I have never since spoken in favour of war. I cannot see myself that war can be regarded as consonant with the spirit of Christ. . . . The younger educated people in this country in vast numbers are extreme Pacifists, not often, I’m sorry to say, because they are Christians, but because they are human.”

So much for Dr. Barnes's Pacifism, but the question of Pacifism *versus* Militarism, deeply interesting and highly controversial though it be, sinks into insignificance in comparison with that subject which has so passionately obsessed the mind of man ever since he began to think—the eternal mystery of life and death. I have recently been deeply engrossed in Dr. Barnes's *Gifford Lectures*,<sup>1</sup> given at Aberdeen 1927-9, which he was good enough to send me. They make fascinating reading as they deal with most of the problems that vex humanity, and, as he said to me, "incidentally they put out my theological standpoint."

The *Lectures* are full of comfort for those who cannot see any reason why Science and Religion should be foes ; who feel, indeed, that the discoveries of modern scientists, far from invalidating religious faith, have turned over a new page in the Book of Revelation. The wonders they have revealed were apprehended by the writer of the 19th Psalm more surely than by many of the present-day bigoted champions of a narrow orthodoxy. Dr. Barnes does not ask his readers to throw overboard all their old beliefs, but he presents them to us in a new light ; a scientific and, at the same time, Christian light. If he brushes aside beliefs which Science has long proved untenable, he is equally emphatic in his insistence on the limitations of Science.

"I believe," he says, "that the scientific conception of the world leads us to postulate the guidance of a single controlling Intelligence. The philosophic view termed Naturalism suffices when we merely *describe* phenomena. To *explain* them we need to assume the existence of a unifying and directing Mind."

In his final conclusions he is, we feel, completely in agreement

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Theory and Religion*, E. W. Barnes, Cambridge University Press, 1933.

with his famous brother ecclesiastic, Dr. Inge, who has suffered equally from the criticism of clerical diehards, and who ends his brilliant essay *Confessio Fidei*<sup>1</sup> with the words, "With the added experience of nearly two thousand years the modern man can repeat the words of St. Paul, that 'other foundation can no man lay save that which is laid,' that is to say, 'Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.'"

Let us try, however inadequately and summarily, to trace the steps by which Dr. Barnes arrives at this satisfactory conclusion.

In the Introduction to the *Lectures* Dr. Barnes tells us that they are intended for "educated men and women who have no technical knowledge of science or philosophy." To understand many of his deductions, however, especially those which he illustrates by intricate mathematical calculations, demands, I am afraid, an education above the average ; at any rate, far above that which I myself possess. But those calculations are intended to give a picture of the world as known to Science and it is often, as he admits, difficult enough to relate them directly to theology, though they are valuable to the theological student. We must nevertheless, he says, "test religious dogma by the methods of scientific inquiry and refashion them in the light of scientific progress." "*Theology cannot be based solely on spiritual experience ; it must take account of the God of Nature revealed by Science.*"

The Christian Church at an early period of its existence took over from the Jews beliefs as to the creation and early history of the world and the origin of man. Such beliefs, it is needless to say, can no longer be accepted, though they long served as a background to Catholic theology and are associated with the old Christian idea of God. It was an axiom of Catholic orthodoxy

<sup>1</sup> *Outspoken Essays*, W. R. Inge (Second Series), Longmans, Green & Co., 1922.

that the creation took place in time, though opinions differed as to the exact date. In a book called *Magnall's Questions*, which was a favourite educational work of the mid-nineteenth century, we are asked, "When do chronologers fix the formation of the world?" The answer is "4004 years before the birth of Christ." The general belief was that the universe came into existence less than 10,000 years ago. The earth, too, was assumed to be its centre, sun, moon and stars being all subordinate to it. On the earth existed man, created in "the image of God," and his defects were attributed to a "Fall," an act of disobedience to the Creator.

The old Jewish conception of the universe has during the last four centuries given place to a different one. "The single act—or week—of creation is replaced by a process of unimaginable extent, whose beginnings elude us, though soberly argumentative speculation carries them back for at least tens of thousands of millions of years. The earth, far from being the centre of the universe, is a minor planet of a solar system whose central luminary is one of, at least, some 50,000 millions of suns and the universe is, in fact, but one of many 'island universes' of comparable magnitude. For the age of the earth astronomers and physicists compute periods which exceed a thousand million years." Only during the latter part of that period has life developed upon it. Biological evolution has continued for hundreds of millions of years, and finally by such evolution man emerged from an apelike stock. Sub-human types, says Dr. Barnes, were probably in existence a million years ago. Traces of civilization 150,000 years old have been discovered. Pre-history began in Europe, Egypt and the Euphrates 20,000 years ago, while written history dates back to less than 8000 years. Amazing, however, as is this vast increase in knowledge "it has

not enabled us to solve the problems of life." Still less to understand the mystery of life itself.

Most philosophers in the past have agreed with Catholic orthodoxy in the belief that a process of creation by God, *in time and out of nothing*, took place, for it is an old Christian tradition that the earth in the beginning was "without form and void." "We seem," writes Dr. Barnes, "in the analysis of matter to which Einstein's general relativity leads, to see 'in the beginning' a process by which form and structure was given to the void of time-space. As the many complex forms which then arose assumed an ever greater complexity, the material world took shape. It is natural to ask whether, in such development, there was creative activity, the emergence of something new. I feel constrained to answer in the affirmative."

With regard to this wonderful world in which for a brief space we live and move and have our being, Dr. Barnes does not ask us to believe, as do some philosophers, that it is merely a figment of the imagination; a thought of the Supreme Thinker. He holds that the "*physical world exists independently of any human mind.*" But the external world thus postulated, he says, is not necessarily the world as conceived by humanity. We can only believe that we possess some knowledge of it as it is known to God if we also assume that our minds are akin to the Divine Mind; that there is some unity between God and Man; that the Creator is *not* separated from His creatures, but is always being actualized, fulfilled, expressed in Man.

Although Dr. Barnes believes in the Divine creative activity in the creation of the universe, he does not agree with those biologists who hold that the living cannot have arisen from the non-living, and that between the two there is a gap which cannot be bridged save by a special creative act; that God,

when the earth was ready to support life, created primitive forms of life to exist upon it. "*New things emerge within and through the natural order.*" In the fascinating chapters which he devotes to the origin of life he goes into the various theories that have been put forward. His own idea appears to be that there was "a gradual ascent to life during which colloidal (gluey) carbon compounds became living things," as the hot, heavy gases which covered the cooling earth more than a thousand million years ago dispersed. But the origin of life is still a mystery. Like all origins, it is hidden from us. But, writes Dr. Barnes, "There is behind Nature, as it seems to me, a Power who has created and guided and still sustains. His ways are wonderful and our understanding of them will always be partial. The mystery of life is unsolved, probably insoluble. As I see the matter, life and mind are the supreme manifestations of God's creative might."

It is not, of course, within the scope of this essay to follow Dr. Barnes as he traces the path of evolution in the animal and vegetable kingdom through countless millions of years; from the earliest living organism squirming in the hot slime of the primeval swamp, to the higher mammals, culminating in man himself. There can, says Dr. Barnes, "be no doubt as to the fact of evolution. The careful arguments marshalled by Charles Darwin and the knowledge of animate nature accumulated since his day have finally convinced all qualified biologists that species are not immutable. Henceforth all educated men will agree that the constitution of organism is not something permanent. As the generations of living creatures pass, new varieties develop. . . . The same power and process which shaped elephant and tiger, horse and deer, shaped man also."

In a sermon at Westminster Abbey Dr. Barnes said: "To-day



there is among competent men of science unanimous agreement that man has been evolved from an apelike stock. He arose probably a million years ago from a tangle of apes which began to vary in different directions."

Now in this there is no denial of Divine creation, and it is difficult to understand why so distinguished a scientist in his own sphere (electricity) as Sir Ambrose Fleming should have attacked Dr. Barnes so violently, with, as Sir Arthur Keith wrote, "a lack of knowledge of logic and scientific method astounding in a man of his eminence." The fact of evolution is accepted not only by men of science, but also by the best minds in the Church of England. "The discoveries which are still rightly associated with the name of Charles Darwin have proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the so-called lower animals are literally our distant cousins," writes Dr. Inge. That the Church of Rome should reject evolution is only to be expected. She bolts and bars the door in the face of all progress in scientific knowledge ; herein lies her strength—and her weakness.

The old, old question, why, if there is a God, does He permit sin and suffering to exist, frankly troubles Dr. Barnes. He says : "The whole process of evolution is founded on genetic variations. By mutations in the genes, together with more complex chromosome changes, it would appear that God has fashioned the entire development of life upon earth ; by such mutations and changes He has created man. But such genetic variations, as judged by our ethical standards, are non-moral. Good and bad arise alike. On the one hand a mutation can arise from which comes a vision of supreme beauty. On the other hand, the mutation may be the precursor of a series leading to the formation of some loathsome parasite."

"Theologians have often been hard put to it to account for

the existence of evil in humanity. So long as belief in Eve's wrongdoing in the Garden of Eden lasted, a theory of the inheritance of Adam's guilt was put forward as a satisfactory explanation. That theory must now be consigned to oblivion, as the story on which it rests is obviously folk-lore. No 'revolt of angels,' no theory of a Fall will account for such facts. *In the end all attempts to take from God responsibility for the nature of His creatures must fail.* A Hebrew Psalmist in a flash of insight recognized this truth: 'The lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God.'<sup>1</sup> I can see no reason to doubt that the evolutionary process is as clear a revelation of God's creative activity as we can have. Its apparently non-moral character must be with His permission. For some unknown reason He permitted death, disease, struggle, the instincts which have led to selfishness and lust in man, because He willed the higher moral, intellectual and emotional development which in man is such an unexpected outcome of the process."

God Himself, he emphasizes, cannot resemble His creative process in being Himself non-moral. Man, with his ethical sensitiveness and his capability of seeking for ideal goodness, is God's highest achievement and so a revelation of His nature, as God is the source of goodness, beauty and truth. And yet, as we have seen, the raw material of evolution leads alike to progress and degeneration. Here Dr. Barnes reminds us of the sternness of much of the teaching of Jesus. God demands obedience to the purposes of His creation, and this purpose, according to Jesus, is the growth within us of the Christ-spirit. The law of evolution decrees that the animal that fails is punished by swift destruction, so why should the higher animal, man, be exempt? But destruction, the extinction or ceasing to be of that which has

<sup>1</sup> Psalm civ. 21.

failed in the purpose for which it was created—"and," says Dr. Barnes, "conscious purpose seems the only adequate way of accounting for evolution and its consequences"—is merciful compared with the Christian idea of hell held by the Church in the Middle Ages.

"Why," said another, "some there are who tell  
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell  
The luckless Pots he marr'd in making——"

That the great Potter should throw his failures on to the scrap-heap is understandable, but who in these days can postulate a Creator capable of condemning the midges He has created to eternal punishment for the misdemeanours committed during the fraction of an instant they exist on this microscopic planet, spinning in a universe containing, as Jeans tells us, as many stars as there are grains of sand on all the seashores of the world.

"What," asks Dr. Barnes, "does faith in God imply? Most people would probably answer that such faith means belief in some Being who created the world. But such a faith cannot possibly satisfy us. Our faith must be faith in One whose primary attributes are Goodness, Beauty and Truth. It must be associated with belief in an eternal spiritual world."

The God deduced from scientific speculation, he tells us, is an abstraction, as such speculations ignore all that is individual, including the eternal values. In science truth is supreme, and thus the God inferred from it is intolerant of falsehood and superstition. He has a power both harmonious and beautiful. Nevertheless, good and evil find no place in scientific theories, and no arguments based on it lead to a God whose goodness draws man to Himself. And when He can be thought of as a

father, He is not the object of religious aspirations, but merely the end of a limited range of scientific inquiry.

Like Dr. Inge, Dr. Barnes claims objective validity for the Absolute Values, goodness, beauty and truth. "*The real world is a world of absolute values.*" He sums up by saying that any faith in God that is worth having will be based upon the intuition derived from and confirmed by all rightly interpreted experiences, that the values of Goodness, Beauty and Truth are of supreme importance in the Cosmos . . . they reveal the Divine nature. "God, in fact, is the source of Beauty and Truth and, also, He is good."

Dr. Barnes goes on to say that if it be now agreed that God is the Universal Mind in whom and for whom all that exists, we need to explain the relation of finite minds to Him. The eternal values, he says, lead to standards and principles which for the right-minded man have a compelling power. From this he concludes that religion is "a moral trust," and that the religious life is the life fashioned by true value-judgments and elevated by the spiritual power which they possess or reveal "Fellowship with the Unseen," or "a relation towards what is deemed Divine," have been with much justification put forward as definitions which best indicate the nature of religion.<sup>1</sup>

Normal religion, says Dr. Barnes, is always associated with prayer. In prayer the individual seeks God and tries to know His will. Prayer, he says, is the central and highest act of worship. Sabatier—whose *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, is to my mind, the most subtle and penetrating book ever written on that fascinating phase of European history, the dawn of the Middle Ages—describes prayer as "religion in act." Dr. Barnes has no

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Inge writes in *Confessio Fidei*, "The true religion for each of us is the most spiritual view of reality that we are able to realize and live by."

doubt as to the value of prayer. The laws of Nature, which are God's laws, he considers, in no way restrain His freedom. "Thus there is no reason to believe that God cannot grant favourable answers to the crudest petitionary prayers . . . I should even hesitate to affirm dogmatically that petitions for rain or fair weather were unavailing . . . I would pray for a friend's recovery from sickness with the knowledge that such prayers are often of no avail, and yet with hope that God in His goodness would grant my petition."

But, he tells us, we must not forget that in prayer we seek to know God's will. "Jesus with His matchless religious understanding put the petition 'Thy will be done' in the only set formula which He gave to His followers."

In his attitude towards prayer, the most advanced scientific thinker among the bishops draws curiously near to one of the least scientific, the Bishop of London, whose faith is child-like. Both differ from Dr. Inge, who speaks of prayer as the mystical act *par excellence* and does not believe that it is of any avail to pray for material benefits. Perhaps in regard to prayer the Bishop of London and Dr. Barnes are more in touch with modern psychology than is Dr. Inge. The power of mind over matter is immense, though as we all know, it is only now beginning to be dimly apprehended. It is, perhaps, possible that the very concentration demanded by sincere and believing prayer, the attitude of mind of the petitioner, may attract the object of his petition to him.

Dr. Barnes approaches the Evangelical school of thought in his attitude towards conversion. Churches, he says, die of respectability, but conversion is the sudden conviction that all a man's powers and passions can be given to God's service. It takes a man so fully into the realities of the spiritual world that

he ignores respectability and has no need of superstition. "In the religious revival which will assuredly, though perhaps tardily, follow the present unrest, conversion will become once again a great spiritual force. At the present time, however, conversion is rather under a cloud ; perhaps because it is associated with a narrow fundamentalism. Religious emotion, if it is not to be dangerous, must be severely disciplined by the reason, and should always be subject to the guidance, direct or indirect, of some great religious teacher."

In saying that the prevailing unrest will result in, or be followed by a revival of religion, Dr. Barnes will, I think, prove a true prophet. In spite of the decline in church-going and the craze for material well-being, there is among many of the younger generation an intense interest in the more spiritual problems of life, which is due, perhaps to the orgy of hatred, cruelty and intolerance which—like the Black Death in the fourteenth century—is now devastating Europe ; perhaps to very weariness of the incessant change and amusement and the craze for speed which to-day amount almost to an obsession. They want a design for living and they cannot find it, for the present age has no background. It is this craving for something "beyond these voices" that has brought about the Oxford Group Movement. What will be its eventual fate is difficult to predict. Religious movements in all periods have pursued much the same course : a wave of indiscriminating enthusiasm, and afterwards the falling off of most of the original converts, leaving a nucleus which either forms itself into a Sect, formalises, and becomes one of the innumerable small religious communities, or dies.

If its appeal is fundamentally sound and responds to some inherent need in humanity, promising solace in sorrow and

release, from the secret terror that haunts us all—total eclipse—it may develop into a world Faith. *But only if it becomes fashionable.* It has been said that if Christianity had not conquered the intellectual Greeks it is doubtful if it would have survived the fourth century. And yet, alas ! when a movement becomes fashionable, organization follows. It must have its paid priests, its headquarters, its secretaries, indeed, all the paraphernalia of big business. And the letter kills the spirit.

Dr. Barnes is very interesting on the subject of mystical religious experience, so important in the history of religion. Essentially, he says, it consists of experience in which the subject believes he has come into direct communication with the Ultimate Reality. Are these experiences to be given the supreme meaning that mystics claim for them, or are they pathological, psychological abnormalities which yield illusion ? He devotes several pages to a sympathetic discussion of the question. But he has no sympathy with the self-torture practised by many of the medieval mystics, nor with the filthy habits which they believed were pleasing to God. "A tortured body is likely to produce a warped mind." He is, too, fully alive to the danger of religious hysteria and pseudo-mysticism. In the past it led to the devilish cruelties of the Inquisition, and in the present day it manifests itself in the superstition that provides a living for the multitude of unscrupulous charlatans who prey on foolish, credulous women. Mysticism, however, must of necessity enter into all genuine religious faith. "*Behold I show you a mystery.*"

Dr. Barnes, while saying that no consideration of worship as it exists among us to foster religious experience can ignore the sacraments, does not attach to them the supreme importance which they possess for the Roman Catholic Church. "A Sacrament," he says, "is, of course, a psychological process, and

its value is largely, if not entirely, due to suggestion. It is not a *mere* sign of some desire or a *mere* memorial of some event ; but there is in it some measure of efficacy. It works ; it makes the desire more effective ; it causes the memorial to become an active influence. The Cross is, perhaps, the simplest of Christian sacrifices ; for to the man before whose mind it rises as a bulwark against moral cowardice and as an incentive to self-sacrifice, it is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

He warns his readers against "induced sacramental experience," such that he who receives it fancies himself privileged to enter some supernatural realm. "In all human experience the spiritual emerges from the natural—there exists no realm of Super-Nature which is peculiarly God's own as opposed to a realm of Nature where His control and presence are imperfect."

Dr. Barnes considers the recrudescence in England of beliefs connected with the Mass to be a sign of superstition and religious decay. The statement, he says, that the Catholicizing of Christianity was the paganizing of it is more true than most epigrams. He deplors the idea—which during the present century has revived in an extraordinary fashion—that there is a Spiritual Presence after consecration associated with the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Other doctrines and practices discarded at the Reformation have similarly re-established themselves. "We have, in fact," he says, "witnessed in the Church of England within a quarter of a century the significant process of change which transformed the faith of St. Paul into Catholicism. The truth that Catholicism arose from a transformation of primitive Christianity in the atmosphere of the pagan mysteries is often denied, but the known facts are decisive. The influence within Catholicism of ideas associated with the



Mass, 'Holy' water, the relics of saints and so forth, shows the prodigious vitality of primitive religious beliefs."

"We must be on our guard," says Dr. Barnes, "not to use religious experience to establish dogma." Dogmas are, of course, merely assertions that certain propositions in the domain of religious thought are true. *Each dogma which we are asked to accept must therefore be investigated by the dry light of reason.* With regard to the dogma of the Real Presence in the Sacrament, Dr. Barnes quotes a letter from a devout woman church-worker, written to him in the hope of convincing him that Christ was really present in the elements. She describes the religious ecstasy she felt; how she trembled and could hardly walk on rising from her knees. But the pious—and university educated—Hindu is capable of feeling exactly the same religious exaltation in the presence of his idol and will use the fact of his emotions as a proof that the god has condescended to dwell within the image.

The finest religious experience a man can have is, thinks Dr. Barnes, that which on the one hand is free and spontaneous, but finds itself strengthened and deepened by the guidance of Christ, whose teaching is an explanation of, and an incentive to, all that is deepest, strongest and finest in human religious feeling.

Dr. Barnes, while agreeing that the emotional aspects of religion are more easily sustained by worship in which music, candles, coloured images, rich windows, and even smell, play their part, distrusts the sentimental religious emotion aroused by such adventitious aids to worship. The churches have lost much, he says, by cheapening their appeal. The reaction against the Puritan ugliness of the Victorian era was wholesome, but Catholic tawdriness is æsthetically degrading and morally relaxing.

What has Dr. Barnes to say to the man who thinks he was not born to live his little hour on earth, and then to go hence in sure and certain hope of—nothing? Well, he gives him hope.

“Goodness, beauty and truth are attributes of God; and it seems to me that such values when once manifested are eternal and indestructible. For were it to perish, the values which it carries would perish also. *Moreover, such values are associated not with impersonal being, but with finite personality, therefore, if they are to persist the finite self must be immortal.*”

“The conviction that in all changes that take place in time values are conserved, results, of course, from our beliefs that the universe is rational and its Ruler beneficent and wise. Such a Ruler would be untrue to His Nature were He to create values, or allow His creatures to manifest them and then allow them to perish. Such action would render His activity purposeless; God’s universe would, in fact, be meaningless.”

Dr. Barnes, however, does not think that every one without exception is destined for immortality.

“Is there an immortal spirit in some wretched mental deficient with no conscience, no human traits? I think not. But I may be wrong.

“I find myself holding fast to the belief that God preserves what is worth keeping. He has not made man for a whim to throw him in the end like a discarded toy on to some dust-heap of forgotten things. There is in man’s spirit that which is worth keeping, and it shall never die.”

Such then, roughly, briefly and inadequately stated, are Dr. Barnes’s theories with regard to man and his destiny. If a few more of the leaders of the Church showed the same frankness with regard to modern religious problems it might once again

become a living force in the nation. "The Christian religion needs to be drastically restated and brought into line with modern education and modern science," he once said to me.

The Dean of St. Paul's also urges the necessity for reform. "The influence of Christianity in the world steadily wanes. We must admit, if we have the courage to face the truth, that while the rationalists have nothing to offer, what the churches offer becomes less and less acceptable to the masses of Western civilization. The work of the modernist Christian is most desperately needed and offers the only hope of exit from our state of spiritual incoherence." The only alternative to Christ, he tells us, is materialism in which no man of repute really believes.

Anatole France—who laid no claim to being a Christian—said in one of his books that all the virtues known and preached by the ancient philosophers were found in the disciples of Jesus Christ, transformed by a new feeling. "*L'amour de Dieu, homme, et d'un Dieu crucifié : amour sensible, ardent, plein de larmes, de confiance, de tendresse, d'esprit. Évidemment ni les forces naturelles personnifiées, ni le abstrait de stoïcisme n'ont jamais inspiré rien de pareil.*" Certainly we may say with truth that the ethics of Christianity are as far ahead of modern knowledge as the dogmas taught by the Church are behind it. "The Church, however, is now going through a period of transition much as it did in the early years of Elizabeth, after the upheavals during the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary Tudor. It may right itself as it did then, if another war does not make an end of everything."

A question on which Dr. Barnes is at issue with the Catholic point of view is the urgent need for sterilization of the unfit, who nowadays are preserved at great expense to the community. Mental deficient are, he says, breeding much faster than more valuable stocks. I do not pretend to have studied the subject,

but it is startling to learn that the feeble-minded in England equal from .8 to .9 per cent. of the population.

The Anglo-Catholic party in the Church does not like Dr. Barnes. The feeling is heartily reciprocated. He acknowledges frankly that he finds it difficult to understand how men of education and intelligence can bring themselves to believe all the dogmas with which the Roman Catholic Church has embroidered the message of Christ. There is an amusing anecdote told of him with regard to the *Church Times*, the Anglo-Catholic organ. It is said that he was once waiting for a train at a small country station and on going to the bookstall to buy a magazine to while away the tedium of his wait, he found that the boy had only two papers left—the *Church Times* and *Poultry*. He bought the former, and after reading it for a few minutes wished he had purchased *Poultry* !

He cannot help siding with the opposition. Thus, during the War, when he was Master of the Temple, he was constantly telling his distinguished congregation what nice people the Germans really were ! After the War he rightly protested against the iniquitous Peace Treaty, which he said would inevitably breed endless trouble. History has justified his prediction. "Alas !" he said to me, "my press cuttings always reveal me in some controversy." He has since championed the Jewish cause against the Nazi persecutions. A little while ago he told me an interesting incident which occurred when he was coming up to London from Birmingham. He was travelling third-class, as he always does, and in the carriage were three young Jews. They did not address him during the journey, but when the train arrived in London one of them got down his suitcase, another collected his books and papers, while the third called a porter. "You are very kind," said the Bishop, "but why all this civility ?"

"Well, my Lord," said one of them, "we Jews are very grateful to you for all you have said and written in our favour, but the persecutions will not last. The economic condition in Germany is getting worse every day. Soon they will have a financial crisis and then they will be obliged to call us in."

Dr. Barnes is one of the most democratic of Bishops. When last autumn he attended the Autumn Assembly of the Congregational Union at Birmingham, he gave an amusing picture of what would have happened if, a hundred years ago, the Bishop of the Diocese had condescended to visit such an assembly.

"His lordship would have driven here in at least a carriage and pair," he said, "and more probably in a coach and four. A footman with a cockade would have preceded his lordship to help him off with his coat. A chaplain would have humbly followed in his steps.

"The Lord Bishop would have entered with an air of determined affability. His eyes might have shown that the architecture of the building was a little surprising to one accustomed to fourteenth-century Gothic.

"Perhaps an anxious sniff might have suggested a Victorian Poor Law Inspector anxious to see whether the workhouse had been sufficiently cleansed with carbolic soap.

"His lordship would have begun his speech by saying that, so far as possible, he was anxious to cultivate cultural relations with dissent, though of course he could not countenance schism. He would have said that the value of orthodoxy was supreme, but he trusted he was broadminded enough to find goodness—when present—in grievously mistaken men."

Later the Bishop envisaged the scene a hundred years hence when the Midland Commissioner for Cultural Development

came to the Amalgamated English Ethical Society's principal centre.

"The Commissioner is a man of distinction and power," said Dr. Barnes. "He is a member of the Upper Proletarian House. His magnificent motor car is preceded by another carrying two comrades of the rank and file. One helps him to remove his coat, and his secretary follows unobtrusively behind.

"The scene, in fact, reminds the observant angels of the visit of the Lord Bishop two centuries before.

"The Commissioner, urbane and condescending, is compelled to observe that some ethical societies are not quite orthodox in their doctrine of the State. At these words a ripple of fear is observed among the forty badly crippled men who were present at the last purge.

"The Commissioner finds himself compelled to stress the urgent need for immediate rearmament. Drawing a moral from history he recalls the magnificent contribution of aeroplane engines made at Birmingham during the War which preceded the revolution, of which they were the proud heirs, and says that if it were not for those engines they might still be believing in Christianity."

Dr. Barnes has little patience with those comfortable people who abuse the dole and tell you it is ruining England. "What untold misery it has averted and how little it is wasted!" he says.

In private life he is the most gracious of men; and much pleasanter life would be if that most charming of qualities were more cultivated! He is an enthralling conversationalist; he makes evolution and biology more exciting than any fiction. No one is more tolerant to human failings. When recently the bench of bishops were quarrelling as to whether divorced persons

should be allowed to communicate or not, the Bishop—in the minority as usual—related this anecdote :

“Two women went into a cathedral for worship. One walked forward evidently to Holy Communion. She was cold, hard, self-centred, censorious. She derived a large income from slum property.

“She gave in a niggardly manner to good causes, and the money which she saved was invested profitably in the shares of armament companies and whisky combines. As she went forward she said, ‘I am glad that I am not an open, notorious evil-liver like this other woman.’

“The other woman dared to go forward to the Lord’s Table. Her life had been tragedy. She had married the wrong man, to discover that he was a foul creature, filthy in mind and diseased in body.

“She had divorced him, and then she had married again, hoping to make life once more tolerable. She had two children, and she wished to use the Sacrament of Holy Communion to draw her husband and children more closely to one another that their lives might be worthy of those who tried to be Christ’s followers.

“And she cannot get the help of that Sacrament which she so dearly wished to have.”

As the Bishop concluded his parable he paused, looked up and down the length of the table at which the bishops sat, and said :

“Do we go to Holy Communion because we are righteous, because there are no sins in our hearts ? Is admission to the Lord’s Table the certificate of moral character ? Surely we all have sins in our past lives of which we are ashamed.

“Surely from time to time the fact that we belong to a

society which is so unlike the ideal of Christ causes us the severest trouble.

“I cannot see that it is right to fence the altar. We ought to encourage all who desire the help of Christ to live better lives and to come to His Table. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

There is something rugged about the Bishop. At school and at Cambridge besides being a brilliant scholar he was a noted athlete. If a religious revival does come about he would not have religion made an easy thing. The poor are too apt to regard religion as an insurance policy valid in both worlds, and the rich and successful are frequently given so to identify their piety with their success that they end by being unable to distinguish one from the other. If our souls really are of value to the Great Architect of the Universe, the effort to present them to Him in as unsullied a condition as our sinful nature permits is surely worth hard striving. And most of us are so unimportant in this world that to be of some consideration in the next should quicken our lagging footsteps.

Dr. Barnes's approach to religion through science has convinced me more than any of the numerous books I have read on Christian apologetics and Theology that unless one can postulate the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing Being, who wills good and not evil, the wide earth and all that therein is are absolutely meaningless. And if in the last event the universe is a mathematical abstraction, a thought of the Great Thinker, it does not invalidate the belief that God created man in His own image—His *mental* image, for man too, is able to think, limited though his range of thought must necessarily be. And to apprehend, however dimly, the truth, the beauty and the goodness which lie behind the veil, leads one—at least so it seems to me—



## GEORGIAN PORTRAITS

to the hope that God is a personal God and can be approached by His creatures.

Let me conclude by quoting from the final paragraph of Dr. Barnes's book.

“To no companion of earth's short journey need we give an everlasting farewell. What we begin here we shall finish hereafter, if, indeed, it be worth the finishing. The fact that life is short and precarious matters little, insomuch as those who have travelled with us here shall be our companions beyond the grave, if we and they alike seek the City of God.”

## A COMMENT

*By Douglas Woodruff, Editor of "The Tablet"*

THE quotation with which this essay on Dr. Barnes opens makes a convenient text for these few brief lines of criticism. "The religion," it runs, "which is to guide and fulfil the present and coming ages, whatever else it be, must be intellectual."

"Intellectual" is the note, and Bishop Barnes is primarily labelled as a scientist, a man trained in and wedded to the scientific approach. Yet it is impossible, reading his work, whether in his own writings or as succinctly and clearly recapitulated in this essay, not to see that he continually neglects to observe the high canons incumbent upon truly scientific men. He is absorbed in "the present and coming ages," and is content with a most superficial and, in consequence, often inadequate and unjust impression of the past. An uneducated reader would take away an impression of the Christian teaching of nineteen hundred years that is often little more than a parody. In essence, the historical fact which calls for recognition by the scientist is that "Christianity" is a general term for a body of doctrines which have been, from the beginning, believed and obeyed inside a rigid institutional framework. The first Christians did not merely agree with Our Lord; they joined themselves to the body of His followers, accepting authority and practising rites. The primary function of that authority was to safeguard a revelation.

Men had been told things about themselves which they could not hope to know as the result of their own inquiries, however perfect their laboratories and their scientific instruments. To say "we must test religious dogmas by the methods of scientific inquiry and refashion them in the light of scientific progress" is to beg the whole question of revealed truth. This confusion becomes particularly marked when purely naturalistic and crude efforts, like the attempts to work out a date for the Creation in time, are mixed up with a theological doctrine like the doctrine of the fall of man and original sin. The nineteenth century scientist, deriding Archbishop Ussher's chronology and the date 4004 B.C. is deriding or correcting his would-be scientific predecessor of the seventeenth century. Such things make up the march of science. But a gross injustice is done to our Catholic ancestors if no distinction is made between what they, as their successors to-day, accept and cherish as revealed truths and what they readily admitted to be conjectures or estimates arising out of the state of their natural knowledge at the time. So much of this essay is a flogging of long dead horses which could have been spared had there been more scientific inquiry into what the early fathers of the Church, or the medieval theologians, going over these familiar grounds, laid down about the interpretation of Scripture or the forms which creation may have taken. Some religious thinkers to-day would no doubt call Bishop Barnes an old-fashioned moderate for agreeing with traditional Christianity that the world really exists and was created, and for saying, as others, indeed, have truly said, "that the origin of life is still a mystery . . . the mystery of life is unsolved, probably insoluble." That is the important truth not to be forgotten while using such words as "gradual" to suggest how man came to be, for such words slur over and obscure the uniqueness of man.

I found the same confusion, but perhaps it is rather in this account than in the Bishop's writings, between Darwinism and Evolution. The French do much better to stick to the word " transformisme " for that special account of the way in which, according to Darwin, changes between species were brought about, keeping evolution, as it should be kept, to denote the process itself and for general theory which has a very long pre-Darwinian history. There is a much forgotten book, *Vestiges of Creation*, which was the fashionable reading in England in the 1840s. It came out fifteen years before Darwin, but it was to parody the dinner-table talk which arose from the vogue of *Vestiges of Creation* that Disraeli wrote, in his novels " how we were fishes and we shall be crows." In a word, the facts of a religious history of Europe could be learned by any one wanting the title of scientist, and if they were learned it would not be possible to read sentences as that " the Church of Rome bolts and bars the door in the face of all progress in scientific knowledge," when it is simply a matter of not very recondite inquiry to discover how much all branches of science owe to the Church, the mother of the European universities, and of the scholastic intellectual discipline to which organized natural science owes such debts. Two branches of particular interest to Dr. Barnes owe special debts. Astronomy has been, from the very first, a particularly cherished Catholic study, and every one should know the outstanding place of French priests in the discoveries about very early man, which came to startle and fascinate the nineteenth century. A scientific love of fact would also make it impossible to write about the Christian idea of Hell held by the Church in the Middle Ages, when the particular imagery in question is to be found in Justin Martyr in the second century. Modern men may dislike the idea of Hell, but they ought to

recognize that it comes straight from the New Testament. Equally, the natural history of religions indicated in this essay, that they pass from a stage enthusiasm among a few to be fashionable, and that "alas, when a movement becomes fashionable organization follows," is the simple reverse of the history of the Church, which had organization from the beginning, but did not become fashionable till the end of the third and early in the fourth century. Equally, it is quite unhistorical, and suggests great unfamiliarity with the facts, to confuse medieval mystics with ascetics. The two types are exceedingly distinct. And if Bishop Barnes is alive to the dangers of pseudo-mysticism and religious hysteria, he is in the apostolic succession in this respect at any rate, and one with all the bishops of the long history of the Church. Indeed, their aliveness to these dangers rather than their addiction to pseudo-mysticism is the only channel by which an historian could bring the Inquisition into this subject. And when we read that "a sacrament is, of course, a psychological process," we may pause to think that the primary sacrament is Baptism, which the Church has always insisted shall be administered to infants as soon after birth as possible. All through, these discussions are vitiated by this rather complacent indifference to history. That is the trouble with forward-looking men, that they do not take enough trouble to look at the rock whence they were hewn and the pit whence they were digged. It makes Bishop Barnes write resignedly of himself as an intermediate figure between the pompous Anglican bishop of a hundred years ago and the Midland Commissioner for Culture in the Midlands of the future. It is not, I hope, discourteous to ask whether Dr Barnes is not sometimes puzzled at finding himself holding the office of a bishop, for he is something new in the Episcopal line.

From the beginning until now a bishop has been a ruler of Christians, specifically charged to safeguard truths beyond the ordinary reach of the human understanding, and to protect them from those distortions and emasculations to which each generation, according to its mentality, fashions and predilections, is inevitably prone.



# THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE





THE RT. HON. LORD HEWART

## THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE

*Introduced by Theobald Mathew*

“**M**ARCH 8.—The Right Hon. Sir Gordon Hewart, K.C., His Majesty’s Attorney-General, was appointed to the office of Lord Chief Justice of England in the place of the Right Hon. Baron Trevethin, resigned. Sir Gordon Hewart was afterwards granted the dignity of a Baron of the United Kingdom, by the style and title of Baron Hewart of Bury, in the County of Lancaster.” So runs the official announcement in the volume of the Law Reports which is entitled (1922) A.C.

Many years ago a much-criticized Lord Chief Justice—Lord Alverstone—having occasion to make an *apologia pro vita sua*, remarked with truth that nobody drifts into the position of Lord Chief Justice of England. Lord Hewart certainly did not do so. From the first he steered a straight and easy course for the desirable haven he had chosen.

The incidents of his voyage are familiar to all. A brilliant boy at school and a distinguished scholar at the University, he left Oxford to become a journalist. Lord Russell of Killowen, whose office he was in the fullness of time to hold, and Lord Merrivale had started in the same fashion. Then, called to the Bar, he joined the Northern Circuit and speedily went ahead; “took silk”; became M.P. for East Leicester; and found

himself Solicitor-General at an age when many are still struggling for briefs in County Courts. Alone he did it.

A candid friend congratulating a newly appointed official is said to have told him that he owed his success in life to the two L's. "What," inquired the official, "are they?" "Luck and Low Cunning," replied the candid friend. Lord Hewart relied upon neither of these aids to advancement.

As a junior, as a King's Counsel, and as a Law Officer, he was heard with respect in the Royal Courts of Justice, whether appearing before a judge or a jury; for he was always able to attune himself to his tribunal. He secured a verdict in the "Artemus Jones" case and conducted a Prize Court Appeal in the Privy Council with the same quiet skill.

The House of Commons, usually unfriendly to lawyers, took to him kindly from the first, finding his speeches both forceful and entertaining; and while in office between 1919 and 1922, he was regarded by both friends and foes as the main prop of a Government whose popularity was waning. No member of the Administration was better able to soothe angry critics or pour oil on troubled waters. And when the Irish Treaty was in contemplation, and diplomacy of a high order was called for, he played a prominent part as a negotiator of the settlement.

So it was that when, on the resignation of Lord Trevethin in 1922, he took his seat upon the Bench for the first time, cordial speeches of welcome were made in a crowded Court by the Lord Chancellor and the new Attorney-General. Lord Birkenhead, his former colleague, dwelt upon the loyalty and ability he had shown as Solicitor-General, and his possession of the virtues of urbanity, tact and patience; while Sir Ernest Pollock, comparing him with his predecessors, pronounced him to be gifted with the eloquence of Sir Alexander Cockburn and

the scholarship and polished diction of Lord Coleridge. Both foretold for him a notable career in his new office.

For some sixteen years he has now been fulfilling the prophecies of Lord Birkenhead and Sir Ernest Pollock, and upholding the traditions of the great position which he holds.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD HEWART  
(Lord Chief Justice of England)

“ Careless of censure, not too fond of fame,  
Still pleased to praise, yet not afraid to blame.  
Averse alike to flatter or offend,  
Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.”

POPE.

DAME FORTUNE is a capricious jade. She afflicts a Beethoven with deafness and takes away the sight of a Milton ; on some she showers every good gift and either denies them the capacity to make a proper use of her bounty, or suddenly, for no apparent reason, ceases to smile upon them ; some—men, too, of ability and character—she completely ignores ; nor all their piety and wit will lure her even to glance at them. But Des Grieux was not more faithful to Manon than is this desire of all nations to the man she has taken to herself as lover. Does he seek wealth ? Everything he touches turns to gold. Is he politically or socially ambitious ? Obstacles disappear as he approaches them, and the rough places on his upward path are smoothed for him. One thing only is not within her power to bestow—happiness. That he must find for himself.

The subject of this sketch has from his youth been one of Fortune's prime favourites. Gordon Hewart was born at Bury in Lancashire in 1870. His father, as was the case with H. G. Wells, was a draper ; but a successful draper. As a youth he was not particularly remarkable, except for his industry, which, in those days, was more common than it is with present-day youth. He

was educated at Manchester Grammar School and was so good at winning scholarships that Oxford cost him very little. From the first he decided on a political and legal career, and like so many budding barristers he began by journalism, writing leaders for a Radical paper, bringing to the task a ready wit and an acid pen. Later on he practised as a House of Commons journalist—the best of schools for a budding politician.

But, unlike Lord Snowden, Hewart was clever enough to know that acidity does not pay, nor, indeed, was it natural to him. This short, plump young man had charm, perhaps the most valuable quality an *arriviste* can possess, infinitely more valuable than the gift of satire, even that of a Swift. Every one who met him said, "What a delightful man; what charm! What a good simple soul!" He was all that, but simple! . . .

He was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1902 and success came to him, for he had all the makings of a successful advocate. His cases were always thoroughly worked up, he was courteous and patient in court and, above all, he never bullied witnesses. He had the art of putting himself at once on the best of terms with judge and jury and obtained his verdicts by his powers of persuasion. The twelve good men and true—and simple—looked at that round benevolent countenance, listened to that pleasant voice speaking to them in language they could all understand (the English are suspicious of oratory) and instinctively trusted him. How could it be possible for one who oozed such conscious rectitude to allow them to stumble into any of the pitfalls with which the strait and narrow path of justice is beset?

An admirable example of his methods was the libel case brought by a certain financier of doubtful reputation against

the *Financial World*. The man in question ran one of those *soi-disant* "banks" of which there used to be so many and which were in reality merely money-lending concerns, and the *Financial World* had criticized it rather severely. The case took place a year or two after Hewart had become a K.C. He was instructed by Messrs Zeffertt & Co. With deadly politeness he elicited one damaging fact after another from the plaintiff. He asked him how long ago it was since he had been a member of the Stock Exchange, adding sympathetically, "I think you had the misfortune to be hammered?" One after another he enumerated the names of the various companies with which the plaintiff had been connected and mourned the sad fate of the shareholders, all of whom had lost their money. Never was a crook shown up with such delightful suavity, but when Hewart had done with him he must have felt completely dazed; rather as if he had had his pocket picked by an archbishop!

In 1912 Hewart contested North-West Manchester and was defeated by a small majority, but in the following year he took his seat in the House of Commons as member for East Leicester and from that time he climbed the ladder of fame with dazzling rapidity. He was as successful in the House as he was at the Bar, and in 1916 Lloyd George made him Solicitor-General. It was in 1918, in West Leicester, that he made the scathing speech which caused the defeat by 4223 votes of Ramsay MacDonald, who had held the seat for twelve years. It was rather hard on poor Ramsay. He had entered politics via Labour: the only road open to an impecunious young man of humble birth. But later on he was able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," for with real Scottish caninness he began to realize that the patriotism of the "Haves" was

just as sincere as that of the "Have nots," and far more profitable ! So he swapped horses, with excellent results.

The year 1919 saw Hewart Attorney-General and a knight, and two years later he was in the Cabinet. Honours came upon him thick and fast : he was offered the positions of Master of the Rolls, Home Secretary and Chief Secretary for Ireland, but he refused them all. He knew exactly what he wanted, which was to be Lord Chief Justice, and he was not to be deflected from his path. In 1922 he saw his goal within sight, for the position became vacant and he insisted on his right to the appointment. Lloyd George hesitated. There were other claimants who considered that their claims were equally strong, and Hewart was rather young for such a dignity. He was, however, at the time, the obvious man for the post—indeed almost entitled to it, so Lloyd George gave in. Behold him, therefore, at fifty-two years of age : Lord Chief Justice of England and a peer of the realm. He had climbed high during the twenty years which had elapsed since he was called to the Bar.

There are two great legal positions on the holders of which peerages are usually conferred ; that of Lord Chancellor, who is paid £10,000 a year, and of Lord Chief Justice (£8000). The Master of the Rolls (£6000) is often, but not always, made a peer. All three are appointed by the Prime Minister, who generally chooses them from the highest in Bar rank among his political supporters, who are considered entitled to the first offer of any of these positions which become vacant. The appointment of Lord Sankey, a Lord Justice who had taken an active part in political life, was rather an exception, as also was that of Lord Maugham.

To be a first-rate judge demands very special qualities ;



qualities quite different from those which have brought him success as a counsel. The judge, says Lord Hewart himself, "is required to exhibit profound and permanent impartiality ; but at the beginning he has just left the Bar, where his clients probably expected of him a complete and invincible partisanship. And unless somebody is to be disappointed he must somehow contrive to decide finally in favour of each side. Moreover, he must be at one and the same time a cold and remote figure—a stranger to the joys and sorrows of human life—but somehow also a man of the world, intimately understanding the emotions and the preoccupations of mankind. At one and the same time he must be a miracle of experience, knowledge and sympathy ; but he must also be capable, at decent intervals, of asking such questions as, ' What is a Test Match ? ' and ' Who is Gracie Fields ? ' "

In saying that a judge must be a cold and remote figure, untroubled by the emotions, but with an intimate knowledge of life, he exactly described the late Mr. Justice Avory. " If I were innocent I would rather come up before Avory than any other judge," said a well-known barrister to me, " but if I were guilty I would rather Judge Jeffrey were raised from the dead to try me." Another judge of this type is Lord Dunedin, whose knowledge of the law is profound and whose name stands in Scotland as representing all the qualities most desirable in a judge. Many of his decisions have passed into legal history.

There are those in the legal profession—especially solicitors—who say that Lord Hewart does not possess that impartial detachment which marks the perfect judge. They accuse him of deciding on his verdict before he has weighed all the evidence, and of being influenced by the personalities of counsel and litigants. A judge who decides quickly cannot be otherwise

than a dangerous judge, for so much depends on his decisions. If the Church tells you to go to the devil you are not a penny the worse, but if a judge says, "You be hanged," you *are* hanged !

Perhaps, as a witty writer suggested, the only complete impartiality possible to the human mind is that which arises from understanding neither side of the case ! Perhaps, too, Lord Hewart, who is a perfect advocate, is too human to be a perfect judge, for the perfect judge must be something more than human. Innocence can be very unprepossessing, while one may smile and smile and be a villain. Smiling is part of the villain's stock-in-trade ! An admirable example of a judge incapable of being swayed by his likes or dislikes was Lord Mansfield. Read the account of the trial of Lord George Gordon.<sup>1</sup> During the riots the mob had burnt Lord Mansfield's beautiful house and made a bonfire of his incomparable library, his furniture and his works of art, so he had every reason to be prejudiced against Lord George. But with scrupulous fairness he allowed every point in favour of the accused. It is by his decisions that a judge lives in legal history ; not by his wit, scholarship, humanity and social gifts. Dignity Lord Hewart has in full measure. "When I have to make an application to Hewart," said a barrister, "I feel as if I were asking for an overdraft on a dubious personal security."

Wit, too, he possesses, and it never degenerates into the rather cheap facetiousness which characterized so many of the late Lord Darling's witticisms. Lord Darling, by the way, was once neatly scored off by a counsel. The case concerned the theatrical profession, and the name of George Robey was mentioned. "Who is George Robey ?" asked his Lordship. "He is the Darling of the Halls, my Lord," replied counsel.

<sup>1</sup> Above all, read it in my own *Life of Lord George Gordon* !

No one can make a more delightful and amusing after-dinner speech than Lord Hewart. In one he tilted gaily at the full-bottomed wig worn by judges, saying that the wise men of old well understood its suggestion of wisdom and mystery when they set it on the head of the Sphinx ! On another occasion when the speeches had been rather long he made a very short one and told the story of a parrot, who, seeing a terrier half asleep on a rug, kept calling, " Rats ! Rats ! " As the terrier took no notice, he hopped over to the rug and gave him a peck—and flew back hurriedly to his cage in a rather damaged condition. " Perhaps I have been talking too much," he remarked philosophically. Every one who advocates short after-dinner speeches is a public benefactor. They come at a time when, having well eaten and well drunk, one feels talkative oneself, so unless they are brilliantly witty and very brief, they are an unmitigated nuisance. Avory said that the best after-dinner speech he ever heard was at a dinner given to the very popular secretary of a golf club. His health was proposed and he got up to reply. " Well, Mr. Chairman and friends . . ." he hesitated for a moment and then exclaimed, " No, I'm damned if I will ! " and sat down.

An admirable quality of Lord Hewart's wit is that it is never at the expense of the people whose causes he is trying. It is bad enough to have to appear in court, whatever the reason, and to be the target of a judge's wit makes it worse : such wit is too one-sided. When Lord Hewart does make a witty remark in court it generally arises from the nature of the case he is hearing, just as the decorative passages in a work of Chopin derive from the thematic material. In a dispute concerning defects in one of the new arterial roads, he asked, " Does this road also suffer from *automobilioussness* ? "

Lord Hewart is extremely humane. He has always insisted on the necessity for reform of the divorce laws. Like all intelligent beings—except bishops—he is utterly unable to understand why two unfortunate young people, having made a mistake, should be forced to pay for it for the rest of their lives. With regard to those whom he has to send to prison he says that the real punishment begins after the sentence has been served. “When I think of those in prison and the number of those outside who ought to be inside, I wonder if those who are not caught are really worth the sacrifice they cause those who are caught, to make.”

Lord Hewart will not go down to posterity as a profound jurist. Lawyers agree that he has not the late Lord Sumner’s grasp of principle nor Lord Atkins’s insight into the subtleties of the common law, and he himself would disclaim the encyclopædic knowledge of Sir Horace Avory.

But he presides in the Court of Criminal Appeal and in the Divisional Court with dignity and delivers the leading judgment in graceful and scholarly language. No judge stands better the horrid test of the shorthand writer. Hesitation and excessive scrupulosity on the Bench do not make for judicial excellence, and Lord Hewart is aware of the fact. When he is in charge of the special jury list those who appear before him know that the Lord Chief Justice will take a decided view about the points of the case, and that in due course he will impart it to the jury. They know also that the jury will not readily disagree with the suggestions made to them by Lord Hewart in soothing and conversational tones when the time comes for the summing-up.

As a criminal judge he is kindly and humane.

There have been reforming judges who strove to quicken

the slow course of justice, to lessen its scandalous cost, and to bring an antiquated system up to date. Lord Russell of Killowen and Lord Bowen were of this band. Lord Hewart may fairly be described as cautious in the matter of reform. Though of the Liberal school of thought, he has never clamoured for change. Content to leave well—if well it be—alone, he submits to the circuit system and to the “double appeal” in civil cases, though both were condemned by the Judicature Commission some seventy years ago. *Festina lente* is his motto.

Concerning the unpaid magistracy he sometimes has pungent things to say. Titular head of the King’s Bench Division, he is no tyrant. Like a constitutional monarch he reigns rather than rules, and with his puisnes he is *primus inter pares*. His flock therefore approve of their shepherd.

With the Lord Chancellor’s Department he does not always see eye to eye, and he is believed to think poorly of recent proposals for the bettering of the King’s Bench Division, including the “business manager” recommended by the last body of experts which reported on its shortcomings and necessities. Nor does he approve of the requirement that undefended divorce petitions should be heard on circuit by Judges of Assize. These, in his view, should be dealt with by Judges of the Probate and Divorce Division or by some humbler functionaries.

Perhaps it is as a literary man and classical scholar that Lord Hewart shows to the best advantage. He has an eighteenth-century turn of mind. Probably, as Lord Birkenhead said of him, he would have shone brilliantly in the age of the taverns, bandying wit with Ben Jonson and Chris Marlowe, or arguing with Dr. Johnson in a coffee-house. Few men know their Horace better than he. In an address to the Horatian Society,

of which he is President, he referred delightfully to Horace as "our contemporary." Horace, he says, detested fashionable women and vulgar publicity. He calls him "the poet of the Bachelors' Club and of those circles of male friends who can talk." I wonder how many of these circles still exist. The days are long past when members of the Houses of Parliament adorned their speeches with quotations from the classics; probably if one of the few educated members ventured to do so now, not five per cent. of those present would understand him. Lord Hewart quoted Dr. Johnson who said no one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money. Well—Horace did so. Why, Lord Hewart asked, do brewers and wine merchants neglect such advertisements as they can find in Calverley or Horace :

"O Beer, O Hodgson, Guinness, Alsopp, Bass,  
Names that should be on every infant's tongue."

or Horace's

"Lethe's true draught is Massic wine."

Still, I think Omar did better for the wine merchant :

"I wonder often what the Vinters buy  
One half so precious as the stuff they sell."

All lovers of Dickens—and, thank goodness, even in these days of degenerate taste in literature, Dickens is still a best seller—should read Lord Hewart's delightful article on him. Sam Weller, he tells us, was anticipated by Praxinoe in the fifteenth Idyll of Theocritus in 300 B.C. At the Festival of Adonis, Praxinoe said to the assembled company : "All inside, as the gentleman observed when he had locked the door." Here Dickens cannot be accused of plagiarism as he was not a classical scholar; indeed, he never ceased to lament his lack

of education. Writers have criticized Dickens's law and asked why, in *Bardell v. Pickwick*, Serjeant Snubbin did not call Mrs. Bardell. The answer is that if Dickens—who knew a lot of law—had done so, he would have been thirty-eight years ahead of the law of evidence. Lord Hewart hates those who “praise Dickens with faint damns.” No one else has caused so much laughter and happiness, he says. Which of us, now past middle age, can forget the thrill Dickens gave us when as boys we first met him? “There never was such another,” said Dr Jowett at Oxford. What, by the way, is middle age? Lord Hewart says, “Isn't it always a little farther than a man has got?” “Don't call him middle-aged for another twenty years,” he said to a barrister who had referred to his client, who was forty-one years old, as “middle-aged.”

Why is it that you see so many serene fine old faces among the higher ecclesiastics and bishops? Oscar Wilde said that it was because bishops believed at eighty exactly what they believed at eighteen, but he did not explain the serenity of judges. Perhaps it is because they have seen so much of the infinite variety of human nature that they have come to accept it and, at the same time, to congratulate themselves that *they* are there to correct its deficiencies. A calm self-satisfaction makes for serenity and longevity.

Lord Hewart is pleased with himself. Someone wrote of him that he was “pleased by his success and pleased that he is pleased by it.” His face is a very legal face. T. P. O'Connor said that there was nothing in his features to suggest the brilliant mind that lies behind them, but he might have said the same about any number of famous judges. Look at the portraits of dead and gone legal luminaries at any of the Inns of Court; you will find many Lord Hewarts among them.

He has no intention of retiring, indeed, why should he ? "I shall never retire or resign as long as I live," he said. He has been Lord Chief Justice for nearly sixteen years, longer than any other Lord Chief Justice has held the post, except Lord Mansfield, who held it for thirty-two years. The title then, however, was "Lord Chief Justice of the King's—or Queen's—Bench." The change in style was made in 1875.

Lord Hewart has managed to keep himself in the public eye better than any judge with the exception of Lord Darling. He likes publicity. It might be said of him as was said of a famous scientist, that he could race any journalist from Charing Cross to Fleet Street and come in an easy winner. Mr. Justice Eve, he once said, had "given himself more prominence in the public eye by acknowledging that he hated music than he had gained by nineteen years of flawless judgments in the Court of Chancery." "Had he perhaps," asked his Lordship, "practised on a saxophone in secret ?" I should hate to think that he has done so : it would be almost sadistic !

And so let us leave him, pleased with his dignity, pleased with life, pleased with himself. Though he is not a Mansfield or an Ellenborough, he is a great personality, and if, perhaps, he has not added so much lustre to his high office as have some of his predecessors, he has done nothing to dim that lustre. It may well be said of him that, like Charles II, he has never said a foolish thing.

Lord Ellenborough once, when in debate a very dull peer began, "I put the question to myself," turned to him and said, "And a damned silly answer you must have got" !

Lord Hewart is incapable of giving "a damned silly answer" to any question on any subject under the sun.





MR. JOHN GIELGUD



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*Introduced by W. A. Darlington*

AN accusation is often made against the dramatic critics of the present day that they pay too little attention to acting. They write, say their accusers, at length about the work of the dramatist, but they are apt to dismiss the players in a few summary sentences. An earlier generation of critics, we are told, did otherwise. They wrote about acting with gusto and in great detail, with the result that some of them gave to posterity the chance to know what the actors of a bygone day were like.

There is truth in the accusation, though in justice to the critics of to-day I must point out that the change is not of their making, but has been forced upon them. The men who discussed actors and their methods so fully in the past did so for two reasons. They had unlimited space at their disposal, and there was little besides acting for them to discuss. The playwrights of their day were mostly theatrical hacks, so that only through the actor could any new thing that was rich or strange reach their stage.

It is different now. Even though voices are to be heard constantly bewailing the triviality of our theatre, the fact remains that we have a constant succession of plays that are original enough in form or content to demand our critical interest. The work of men so individual in their outlook and

methods as Shaw, Barrie, Somerset Maugham, St. John Ervine, Bridie or Priestley cannot possibly be regarded as mere "actor-fodder." All else being equal, the creative artist has a right to be set before the interpreter (who can console himself very easily with the reflection that it is he who gets the popular acclaim). This change in the theatre has coincided with an alteration in journalistic practice. The rise of cheap popular amusements of all kinds has meant that much newspaper space which used to be available for the theatre has now to be shared among such new interests as the cinema, broadcasting, dog-racing and professional football. Dramatic critics have fewer columns, and those who serve daily papers have far less time to write in.

For all these reasons the space devoted by the regular dramatic critics to an analysis of the art of the actor is not very great. Only when a prominent player appears in one of the classic parts, or brings off a *tour de force* of acting in a play of no great merit (as, for example, Flora Robson did in "Autumn") does the modern critic find himself impelled to depart from habitual practice. All the more important is it, therefore, that writers of Mr. Colson's skill and care should sometimes make our leading actors the subject of their studies, and so help to fill an unfortunate gap.

With what Mr. Colson has written I find myself so much in agreement (especially with the remark that Mr. Gielgud's Romeo is in love with love as an æsthetic emotion, never with Juliet) that to praise it would be immodest of me. But I wish that he had not encouraged Mr. Gielgud to go on producing the plays in which he appears. Excellently though he does it, he has not the physical stamina for the double task, and can only produce at the expense of his acting.

## MR. JOHN GIELGUD

"The player acts the world ; the world, the player."—STABLE.

WHAT an incalculable debt the English theatre owes to the Terry family ! Fred, the incomparable Ellen, Marion, Kate, Phyllis Neilson, and now, another male, for though the latest member of the family to adorn the stage was born *Gielgud*, he is Terry not only "when the wind is southerly," but in whatever quarter from which it blows.

John Gielgud, the subject of my sketch, second son of Frank Gielgud and his wife Kate Terry Lewis, a younger sister of Ellen Terry, was born in 1904. He was a lively, intelligent child and in due course went to a preparatory school. Little boys, once they have got over their first tragedy—the sudden plunge into school life—generally enjoy themselves immensely. They have not yet acquired the mass of prejudices, inhibitions and conventions that are driven into them at their public schools ; the kindly intimacy and the civilizing influences of the home are still predominant, and they live more or less like a big, noisy family. So little John Gielgud was happy enough.

At Westminster School, which he entered when he was fourteen, he found life less pleasant. The English public school is an ideal institution for the average healthy youngster who is fond of games and not too intelligent. For a nervous, sensitive, artistic boy it is generally hell. And every public school has its little victims. The good-looking, athletic boy is worshipped in this gay, rowdy Garden of Eden, whose young inhabitants

are governed by their own immutable laws and subscribe to a scale of values utterly different from those of their sadder and more sophisticated elders : never in after life will he know such power and popularity ! There is nothing new in this worship of the attractive adolescent ; we all know how highly physical strength and beauty were considered by the Greeks in the great days of their civilization.

But in Greece boy-worship was—at any rate at its best—a purely æsthetic emotion into which sex entered hardly at all—the Spartan friendships, for instance. Such friendships, however, are very apt to lead to less ideal relationships, as we gather from the eleventh book of the Greek Anthology. In Germany, where they have always been tacitly accepted, they have now become an essential feature of the Nazi *régime*. The young Nazi who is seen flirting with a girl is severely frowned upon.

But I am not writing about the natural or unnatural selection which is the result of segregating the adolescent male ; I merely wish to point out how difficult public school life is for an intellectual, temperamental boy who loathes cricket and football and regards “ gym.” with horror. Such a boy lives in a perpetual state of fear which may—and frequently does—do irreparable harm to his nervous system. It can also induce cruelty, leading him to revenge himself on others for what he has suffered. I believe that at some of the public schools nowadays, notably at Eton, the boys’ individualities are studied and the aim of education is not that they should all be as like each other as peas in a pod. Be that as it may, Westminster School was certainly not John Gielgud’s spiritual home and he was very glad to say good-bye to it.

His father had meant to make him an architect, and on

leaving school he began his studies. What, by the way, could be more useful to a theatrical producer than a knowledge of architecture? But he had always been intensely fascinated by the theatre and everything connected with it. It was bred in him, and the call of the blood was as insistent as was the call of music to Handel or of poetry to Keats, so he had his will and in 1921 he went in for and won a scholarship in the Benson Dramatic School.

Modest as is John Gielgud—and no one could be more so—he must have seen from the first how eminently he was graced with the qualities most essential to an actor. He had only to look in his mirror—and the most modest of youths do so occasionally—to realize this. That tall, slim figure; the strongly marked, clean-cut features, fine eyes, mobile mouth and eloquent hands. And that musical instrument, his voice, too! What more could the budding actor ask of Nature?

His training at the Benson School was excellent, and after leaving it he had the experience which is the most valuable of all: that of for some years playing all sorts of parts in all sorts of plays. Actually his first professional stage engagement was in the crowd in "Julius Cæsar" at the Old Vic in 1921. One of his first London appearances was in the late Sir Nigel Playfair's production of the "Insect Play" by the brothers Capek. He was the "Mayfly." This bitterly satirical work with its weird setting and costumes interested some of us enormously, but it was above the head of the ordinary playgoer. At that nursery of talent, the Old Vic, he gained valuable experience, playing among other parts, Romeo, Antonio, Richard II, Oberon, Mark Antony, Orlando, Macbeth, Hamlet, Henry Hotspur, Prospero, Malvolio and Lear.

Gielgud acted very wisely when he joined Fagan's "Oxford



Players." Among the plays in which he took part were Congreve's "Love for Love," "She Stoops to Conquer," "Monna Vanna," "Cedipus," some of Shaw's comedies, and the queer, fascinating "Cherry Orchard" by Tchekov, in which Agate said he was "perfection itself." Its rather sad philosophy suited him exactly—the eternal riddle of life and death and the conclusion that life is all that matters; that death and sorrow are merely natural inevitable incidents, too much importance being attached to them in modern times. But even at that Tchekov cannot make up his mind. Is life worth while or futile:—true or false:

From the first Gielgud's bent was for tragedy. If, as Ellen Terry might well have said, "A star danced and I was born," what could have happened at the birth of her nephew, John: Perhaps Hamlet himself followed his father's example and revisited the glimpses of the moon, whispering to his future protagonist that man "cometh in vanity and departeth in darkness and that his name shall be covered with darkness."

It was in "Richard of Bordeaux" that Gielgud may be said definitely to have arrived. I can understand its enormous success, given its admirable setting and the acting of Gielgud and the rest of the cast. It was an excellent "acting" play and Richard was as "easy as lying" to Gielgud. To my mind it was—like "Under the Red Robe" or "Rupert of Hentzau"—just the play for boys and for the tired business man who hates like poison anything which obliges him to think. But I could not help wondering, why do it when you have Shakespeare's "Richard" with its subtle character painting and the magic of its language.

Gielgud having been elected a lord of the theatre with "Richard," made himself its king with "Hamlet." I have seen

most of the Hamlets for, alas ! more years than I care to remember, and take it for all in all I liked his Hamlet better than any of them. Irving was always Irving and his voice irritated. Tree—to use his own description of himself which he put into the mouth of Gilbert—was “funny and not at all vulgar.” Forbes-Robertson was often exquisite, but always too subdued. The lovely voice too often suggested the church, and his Hamlet was never a very young man. John Barrymore was rather a manly than a melancholy Dane and the poetry of the lovely lines quite eluded him. I also saw Bernhardt play the part. *C’était formidable !*

Gielgud was in many ways the ideal Hamlet. He looked about twenty, which is of course just about the right age for a youth who has just left the University :

“For your intent in going back to Wittenberg  
It is most retrograde to our desire,”

says the King ; which, indeed, seems only reasonable, for according to the play Hamlet was thirty !

“How long hast thou been a grave-maker ?” he asks the clown.

“Of all the days i’ the year, I came to’t that day that our last King Hamlet o’ercame Fortinbras.”

“How long is that since ?”

“... it was the very day young Hamlet was born ; he that is mad and sent into England.”

And again :

“I have been sexton here man and boy thirty year.”

Up to the end of the seventeenth century, boys went to school—there were no preparatory schools—at about eight years old and to the University at fifteen or sixteen, so Hamlet,

if thirty were really his age, must have been at Wittenberg for at least twelve or fourteen years. But Shakespeare did not worry about such trifling incongruities. Did he not endow Bohemia with a sea-coast? Probably he fixed Hamlet's age at thirty to suit Richard Burbage who created the part and who was then middle-aged and rather fat—"and scant of breath."

Another thing which is difficult to understand is why Hamlet used poor Ophelia "so rough." The once popular theory that the mental shock he had undergone had caused him to lose his reason is now almost entirely discredited. Gielgud thinks that his treatment of her was due to the fact that his mother's guilt had caused him for the time being to hate and despise the whole sex. Certainly he insulted them right and left. It seems to me that he himself settles the question when he says :

"As I perchance hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on."

He puts it on often enough. Note how he plays with Polonius ; pulls his leg, as the saying is, and again with "gentle Guildenstern." After all, can one wonder that the sight of his father's ghost should have thrown him off his balance? In those days people believed implicitly that spirits, good and evil, revisited the scenes of their earthly life, and they also believed in a personal devil. Hamlet's nervous hysteria and his wild and whirling words were quite natural considering the terrible crime the ghost had just revealed to him, the truth of which he did not doubt. So, too, were his subsequent fits of moody depression alternated with bursts of reckless gaiety. He passionately desired to avenge his father's murder, but felt himself utterly

unable to cope with the situation. And this not from lack of courage :

“ For though I am not splenitive and rash,  
Yet I have something in me dangerous  
Which let thy wisdom fear.”

Another point one may well note in defence of his sanity is the quickness with which he recovers his self-control. Certainly Horatio did not think him mad. Nor did that great lover of Shakespeare, Anatole France, who writes of Hamlet : *Vous êtes prompt et lent, audacieux et timide, bienveillant et cruel, vous croyez et vous doutez, vous êtes sage et par-dessus tout, vous êtes fou. En un mot, vous vivez. Qui de nous ne vous ressemble en quelque chose ? Qui de nous pense, sans contradiction, et agit, sans incohérence ? Qui de nous n'est fou ?*

Hamlet was essentially modern ; a creature of to-day—disillusioned, introspective, neurotic ; doubting everything and everybody, above all, himself. The nineteenth century did not understand the type ; it was too prosperous, too material, too sure of itself. Hence the futility of much that was written about him by many of its Shakespearian critics. Gielgud had, I think, no need to study the character very deeply, for in many ways he is himself Hamlet. He told me that he tried to imagine him as just a normal youth overwhelmed by the sudden tragedy. “ Why do the people imagine a vain thing ? ” ! Could an ordinary young man, given to sport and love-making, have become all in a moment so neurotic or so intelligent ? Hamlet's sad philosophy is not that of any young “ hearty ” I have ever met.

Gielgud made one follow the workings of Hamlet's tortured mind with uncanny subtlety ; he almost hypnotized his audience.

In the "To be or not to be" speech, instead of standing stock-still and merely using gestures, he walked about the stage, pausing from time to time. You seemed to be watching the very birth of his thoughts. Never once throughout the play did he strike a false note, unless, perhaps, he was occasionally a little too violent. His death scene was so exquisite that when the curtain fell I could not trust myself to speak. A rare experience for me !

Hamlet has not aged an hour in three centuries, for Hamlet is *Everyman*. His soul is the same age as yours or mine ; he is what you and I are ; a human being, struggling to steer his frail barque through the perilous sea of life which every moment threatens him with shipwreck.

Gielgud produced the play himself and, on the whole, I liked the production immensely. The play scene was particularly good : it had a brooding, slightly sinister atmosphere. You felt from the first that this was "miching mallecho," it meant mischief. I much preferred John Barrymore's conception of the ghost scene, however. Barrymore's castle ramparts were far more convincing and his making the ghost a luminous shadow was wholly admirable. Of all the stage ghosts I have ever seen, it was the only one that did not strike me as being comic. The churchyard scene, too, was to my mind more effective as given by Forbes-Robertson. There was a real church and a real churchyard, with a melancholy sunset in the background.

Gielgud suffered from the necessity the management was under of making Hamlet a popular success and attracting the "Richard of Bordeaux" public. It was a good idea of his to play the scenes continuously with only one interval. It sustained the interest and heightened the tension, but it also hurried the action overmuch and this impression of "speeding" was

accentuated by the actors, all of whom, with the exception of Gielgud himself, the King, Queen and Polonius, spoke their lines too quickly. And why cut the beautiful dialogue between Horatio and Marcellus at the end of the first scene? Such speed renders impossible the gradual working up to the inevitable climax of the final catastrophe which is so characteristic of Shakespeare's genius. There is the same sense of inevitability in that wonderful chapter in the First Book of Kings which describes the death of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead.

I did not like Gielgud's Romeo nearly so much as his Hamlet. Where it was merely a matter of speaking exquisitely the exquisite poetry, he was, as always, completely satisfying. In such lovely lines as :

“Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops”

or :

“ . . . O, here  
Will I set up my everlasting rest  
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars ”

his voice was music itself. But Romeo is a lad, thrilled with the wonder and ecstasy of young love, and truth to tell, Gielgud is not a good stage lover. He is in love with Love as an æsthetic emotion ; never with Juliet.

“ O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright !  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear :  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear ! ”

Too rich for use . . . Quite !

I wish some artistic and intelligent manager—if any such

there be—would give us a season of Shakespeare's plays as they were played in Shakespeare's day, with the female parts acted by boys. Some of them, notably "Romeo and Juliet," "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Love's Labour Lost" would gain as much by the change as others of them gain by the employment of women. Those highly-trained "Children of the Chapel Royal" must have been delightful in rôles that do not call for great passion. Ben Jonson paid tribute to their talent in his charming lines on the untimely death of the little boy Pavey ; lines instinct with that wistful playfulness which is so near to tears :

" Years he numbered scarce thirteen  
When Fate turned cruel,  
Yet three full zodiacs had he been  
The stage's jewel."

And that boys can still act as well as ever no one who has seen the Westminster play or one of the performances at Radley College can doubt for a moment.

Shakespeare would most certainly have written many of the passages he gives to his female characters entirely differently had he been writing them for women ; he is always careful to avoid giving his heroines long passionate speeches beyond the capacity of a boy's voice. There is, too, a real boyish quality in many of the women in his comedies : Rosalind, for instance. That Shakespeare intended this is shown by his fondness for making his heroines don "the lovely garnish of a boy" for one reason or another. Here he had an unfair advantage in that his girls *were* boys ! His heroines often give one a curious impression of a certain cold chastity, which is a quality innate in young boys. Gielgud, who in his love scenes gives me the

same impression, would fit in well with the boy actors. In his early days he played the younger brother in "Comus" at the Middle Temple Hall. I wish I had been present. How beautifully he must have spoken Milton's lines on chastity :

" 'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity :  
 She that hath that, is clad in complete steel :  
 And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,  
 May trace huge forests and unharbour'd heaths,  
 In famous hills, and sandy perilous wilds :  
 Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,  
 No savage fierce, bandit or mountaineer,  
 Will dare to soil her virgin purity."

As I have said above, many, indeed most, of Shakespeare's heroines gain immeasurably by being given their rightful medium of expression, but others—such as Rosalind, Celia, Imogen and Titania, for which parts he evidently had certain boy-actors in mind, lose in like measure. We have an analogy in music. Who that has ever heard the music of such composers as Lully, Rameau, Couperin, in fact most of the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century music, played on a harpsichord, can ever wish to hear it again on a grand piano ? And yet many compositions which were written for the harpsichord or clavichord, especially those of Bach, sound much better on the modern instrument. Bach, like Shakespeare in his more dramatic rôles, was struggling with his medium. Probably no one will agree with me, which will confirm me in my opinion ! But in any case there can be no excuse in giving *boy* parts to women, who rarely manage even to suggest a boy. I have actually seen the parts of Peter Pan, Lucius and the inimitable Moth in "Love's Labour Lost" given by imbecile managers to broad-beamed females !



I have not seen Gielgud in "Richard II," whom he ought to play to perfection, for Richard is first cousin to Hamlet. But Agate—who is nearly always right—thought his Richard only "partly good."<sup>1</sup> Of his Macbeth, however, Agate says: "I have seen all the better-known Macbeths for the last twenty-five years, but they all failed except John Gielgud, as they lost grip. He kept up the tension in the difficult last scenes and held the audience spellbound." True, and even more admirable was the subtlety with which he conveyed the gradual deterioration of Macbeth's character as, urged on by his devilish wife, his passion for power overwhelmed all scruples and stifled every decent instinct:

"Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still;  
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill."

It is a pity that so well-graced an actor as Gielgud should waste his talents on some of the plays he has appeared in. He is too poetic for the arid, matter-of-fact Shaw: too sound at heart for the dreary, degenerate young men in such ephemeral stuff as "The Vortex," "Musical Chairs" and "The Maitlands," plausible as he makes them seem. And I did not think that the rôle of the very business-like author in "The Seagull" suited him. He tells me that he is a little tired of playing melancholy, neurotic parts. He wants very much to play Shylock, and he has his own ideas of the part. "Shylock," he said to me, "is made such a noble character by most actors that he makes all the others look like dirty cads. I should like to play him as a typical old Venetian Jew of the Ghetto, roused at times to

<sup>1</sup> This was written before Gielgud's admirable production of "Richard II" at the Queen's Theatre. In reviewing this Mr. Agate praised Gielgud's "Richard" unreservedly.

nobility by his pride of race and love of his daughter—both very Jewish characteristics, these.” I hope we shall have the chance of seeing his Shylock. It is sure to throw a new light on that interesting child of Abraham. That he can be virile when he chooses was shown by his splendidly robust Noah. The hairy, hearty old ruffian was a joy from start to finish. How he stood up to God !

Like Irving, Gielgud can play comedy parts well. I saw him in “The Importance of Being Earnest,” and the seriousness with which he spoke Wilde’s gay and brilliant nonsense made him score point after point. He looked rather as Alexander looked in the part, but had not the “tailor’s block” air of that perfect gentleman.

Gielgud never makes the mistake of under-acting ; the curse of the London stage to-day. Our actors will not let themselves go ; they are afraid it isn’t quite respectable, definitely not the thing ! Now you cannot play the big scenes in “Macbeth” or “Hamlet” in a whisper or a mumble. They were written for actors who gave every ounce of themselves and were not afraid to be rhetorical. The craze for being natural spoils a great many otherwise talented English actors. The late Charles Hawtrey, whom every one was wont to say was “just himself” and never acted, once said to me, “If I were to behave and speak on the stage just as I am doing now I should make no effect whatever. I am *acting* every moment I am on the stage.” Colley Cibber wrote : “In the theatre *nothing can take the place of acting.*” Great acting always fills the house and rouses the audience to enthusiasm, and so leads to still greater acting, for applause is intensely stimulating. “The mysterious sympathy of numbers,” as Farrar calls it, is the breath of life to an actor.

Gielgud has a very interesting personality. He has, too, I

am glad to say, a certain aloofness which is an excellent thing in an actor. He was told by an aunt when he first took to the stage to be "affable but not familiar with his fellow-players"! Or, as Polonius puts it, "Familiar but by no means vulgar." The stage attracted the public more in the days when actors were regarded as wonderful, mysterious beings living in a glamorous world of their own. He ought, however, to guard against certain mannerisms which seem to be growing on him: a touch of effeminacy and a slight jerkiness, for instance. Perhaps he has achieved fame too quickly? To have won such success at so early an age is enough to turn the head of any young man. He has never had to struggle. Pinero tells us that Irving was so desperately poor at one time that he knew what it was to have to borrow a shilling to get his hair cut. Cibber once acted for six weeks without receiving any salary at all. Actors in his day were more often than not paid only half their nominal salaries and four pounds a week was considered good pay. One would not wish Gielgud suchlike experiences, but nevertheless it is a truism—and truisms are so often true—that the artist who has never had to struggle against adverse circumstances and for whom the path of life has been strewn with rose-leaves seldom realizes the best that is in him: genius is a plant that needs the shadows as well as the sunshine.

Gielgud, however, is ambitious, hard-working and self-critical, so he is not likely to be contented with a too facile success. His tastes are simple. Once, when writing an article about him for *Harper's* I wrote to him asking, "Do tell me what you do when you aren't doing anything?" He answered:

MY DEAR COLSON,—I'm in such a rush that I don't know what to put down! I have no special hobbies

(outside the theatre) except music. I play the piano—and have a huge collection of gramophone records, which I often play — principally Mozart, Bach and Handel.

My flat you have seen—my Essex home is an old pink farmhouse, standing in real country lanes. It has an apple orchard in front of it, and at the back a garden sloping down to a tennis court, and the smallest swimming-pool you can imagine. I have a dog, a Snautzer, and intend to get some pigeons.

Can you make something of this !—Yours sincerely,

JOHN GIELGUD.

Gielgud likes to produce the plays in which he acts. He is right. If you have identified yourself with every detail of a play : speech, action, characters, lighting, scenery and music ; studied all the rôles, decided on the relative importance of each of them and chosen the actors ; steeped yourself in its tone, rhythm, in a word, felt it as a whole, your own part must necessarily reveal itself to you in a totally different aspect from that which it presents if you have to adopt the point of view of another producer with whom you may not see eye to eye. "When I'm preparing a new production," Gielgud said to me, "the first people I talk to are not the actors at all. In reading the play certain pictures—not necessarily stage pictures—have come into my mind. Some of them usually persist more and more strongly each time I think of certain moments of the play. Sometimes I make little drawings and diagrams which I talk over with the people who are to design the settings and costumes. These are the first people I talk to and I discuss with them all my feelings and general attitude towards the play. Long before the first reading with the actors, the designers and I have dis-

cussed the whole visual side of the production. We worked together on the production of 'Hamlet' on and off for six months before we even knew the play was going to be put on.

"I have very strong opinions about the pictorial side of the play. The setting for 'Hamlet' was partly inspired by the setting used by Komisarjevsky, the famous Russian producer, when he produced 'King Lear' at Oxford in 1924. This consisted of rostrums, steps, and a golden cyclorama. By rostrums I mean solid geometrical platforms of various kinds. With rostrums and steps several different levels are made upon the otherwise flat stage, and all the movements and groupings can be made very much more interesting in consequence. A cyclorama is a white concave surface at the back of the stage. Coloured lights are thrown on it and on this concave surface the colours have great depth. One seems to look right into the distance. A cyclorama is not a difficult thing to make, either in canvas, silk, plaster or even sheeting, and very beautiful effects can be obtained with it. It was Komisarjevsky's use of rostrums, steps and a gold cyclorama that impressed me so in his 'King Lear.' I had thought it very fine and very suitable to Shakespearean tragedy. It was a permanent setting. The rostrums were the same all through the play. But in 'Hamlet' we use a revolving rostrum. By turning it round at different angles in a wheeled railway concealed underneath, different sides are presented in turn to the audience, and we can vary our groupings and heights in different scenes quite easily.

"After all this thinking, conferring and planning I start work with my actors. I believe that Granville Barker insisted on reading his play round a table for a week before any one was allowed to move about. This plan enables actors to get used to one another and to the play, and it allows the producer to

study them quietly. He can consider whether his original ideas of the characters are likely to work out well with the living characters who are going to create the play. He should not be too violently autocratic, for the finished production will not be exactly what he first imagined in his mind, nor will the actors who read best act the best on the stage.

"I cannot agree with producers who will not let the actors make suggestions themselves. Nothing is more crushing and depressing if you are an actor, than to be told that you are paid to act, not to think. Let the actors understand the cumulative effects you are aiming at. Remember that they are as interested in their own individual parts as you are in the whole play. You should not keep your lighting and scenic arrangements too secret. They like to see the models of the scenery and to know what kind of dresses they are to wear. Let them feel that they are contributing in some measure to the creation of something new. Actors may not always be easy to direct, but their enthusiasm is tremendous, and if they know what you are driving at, they will nearly always try to help you get the results you want. Only don't encourage them to criticize your ideas, or let them shake your faith in what you are driving at. The producer must have the final word and obedience, or his task is impossible.

"I am sure that at an early stage it is useless to nag about inflections, and to insist upon correct details. One should aim rather at bringing out each actor's individual personality, and suggesting to them all the feelings and motives that prompt their remarks and actions in the play. The actual inflections and emphasis will follow naturally and individually if they are good actors. Only if they are very bad must you teach them parrot-like. It is good to rehearse sometimes away from a stage, even

quite late in rehearsals, and to listen to the words only, sitting so that you cannot see the actors at all. Each speech must have rhythm, and each conversation. It is very important that you should know where the vocal climaxes should come, and explain them to the actors. Pull them up as tactfully as you can at first, trying not to upset them by cutting them off short just when they are getting to an emotional climax, and praising them at first whenever possible to draw them out. After a few days bully them more if they forget what you have told them, and force them to write down notes of business and positions if they can't remember them without. A good stage manager must help by having notes of everything you arrange and everything you alter. Insist on correct pronunciation and audibility, but it doesn't matter if actors keep the book in their hands for several days at first. You go quicker without a prompter and they gain more confidence. The ideal arrangement is to have three or four days in hand before the dress rehearsals, then the actors can play the play right through with very little interruption, and the producer can conduct them on broad lines like the conductor of an orchestra. Here the action should be faster, there slower. Here voices should be pitched high, there low. Here the acting should be individual and sincere, there it should work to a general theatrical effect or climax. At these late rehearsals the producer should make notes and not interrupt, so that the actors may gauge the feeling of a real performance.

"I think that whatever the production may be—professional or amateur—a producer must have terrific enthusiasm, complete authority and, above these, an inexhaustible supply of patience. He must have an eye and an ear. He must have the ability to bring rhythm out of every side of the production, and he must have foresight. Remember that there is never enough time in

the theatre for all that has to be done at the last minute. Leave nothing to chance, therefore—nothing at all, except the temperaments of your actors. Whatever you may fear about the scenery or lighting, you may be sure that your actors will be much better on the first night than they have ever been before, for they have the pleasure then of letting off steam at last before a living, responsive audience, whereas you, who have been their only audience so long, will be condemned to sit in front in unaccustomed silence, unable to do anything more to affect the issue one way or another.

“A first night may be agony to the actor, but I assure you that his agony is as nothing to that of the producer. There is only one worse fate in store, and that is both to produce the play and to act in it oneself. I have done this twice myself, and I can assure you it is a very trying experience.”





MR. WILLIAM WALTON



MR. WILLIAM WALTON

MR. WILLIAM WALTON

*Introduced by Richard Capell*

DEAR COLSON,—Forgive me for backing out, but, after reading your brilliant and interesting article, I cannot for the life of me see what there is for me to say. All I could do would be to labour over the same ground in a more ponderous way.—Yours sincerely,

RICHARD CAPELL.

And this is introduction enough !—P. C.

MR. WILLIAM WALTON  
*The musical death throes of civilization*

"Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throe."—SWINBURNE.

ERNEST NEWMAN, in an article which appeared in the *Sunday Times* a year or two ago, said that the more one knew of the character and the private life of a composer the better one was able to understand and appreciate his music. And so, in his ceaseless efforts to proclaim the glory of Wagner, the god of gods in his musical Valhalla, he calls for more, and ever more, *data* concerning that heaven-born genius and unspeakable person.

It is perhaps heresy to differ from so clever a critic as Ernest Newman, but while realizing fully the importance of being Ernest, I dare to be a Daniel ! To have learnt all there is to be learnt of a man's character, his private affairs, likes and dislikes and the conditions under which he lived, may enable us to think we understand to some extent why he acted as he acted ; wrote as he wrote—I say *think* for more often than not we do not understand the motives by which we ourselves are actuated, so how can we hope to catch more than a fleeting glimpse into that secret city, the soul of another ?—but such knowledge cannot possibly influence our reactions to his work ; these will depend entirely on our own idiosyncrasy.

Let us imagine that two men, both gifted with keen musical intelligence and possessed of more or less the same musical

mentality, arrive from Mars and go to a performance of *Tristan*. Let us also imagine that to one of them Wagner is nothing but a name, while the other has, since his arrival, steeped himself in Wagnerian literature. Their respective reactions to the music will almost certainly be practically the same unless, as is quite likely, human nature being what it is, contempt for Wagner's mean and selfish character and his half-baked pinchbeck philosophy, has prejudiced the latter against the *man* and so set up in his subconsciousness mental reservations with regard to the music.

The only way to obtain a true and unbiased impression of a man's artistic achievements is to study them dispassionately, letting them speak for themselves. An intimate acquaintance with his love affairs or his financial chicanery will not help us to do them justice.

It is unfortunately true that prejudice plays an important part in our judgment of anything that is new to us, especially with regard to music and painting. In looking at the work of a contemporary artist, or listening to a new musical composition, we should dismiss from our minds the very word *modern*. Palestrina, Monteverde, Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy were all in their day the most daring of modernists, but they were not iconoclasts. They made use of the heritage left them by their great predecessors, developing it and unconsciously reflecting in their work the changing conditions of their respective periods. Thus, the music of Lully and Rameau reflects exactly the stately and ceremonious court of *le Roi Soleil*; that of Mozart the aristocratic elegance of eighteenth-century Vienna; that of Beethoven the aspirations and political agitations of the Napoleonic era, while Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt and their contemporaries voiced the romantic emotions of a prosperous

*bourgeoisie* who sighed for love, believed in religion and progress, and were convinced of the essential nobility of man and of his high destiny. All of them believed sincerely in the artistic gospel they preached and were in harmony with the various social conditions under which they lived.

But a composer to-day who would write in the idiom suitable to the fixed social order of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be an anachronism ; his work could not be other than utterly insincere. And yet the public which, in the unhappy, dangerous times in which we now live, flies to music to soothe its nerves and enjoy for a brief hour that peace which the world cannot give, turns and rends the writer whose compositions reflect life as he finds it around him. This places him at a tremendous disadvantage with the composers of the past, who, as we have seen, were for the most part in sympathy with their age.

The musical public—that small minority of the population which throngs the Promenade and the Courtauld concerts, fills the less expensive seats at Covent Garden and flocks to Sadlers Wells—is incurably romantic and will always remain so. How could it be otherwise ? The mechanization of life cannot change human nature. To the vast majority of humanity the primitive necessities for which mankind has fought and striven since the dawn of civilization are still the same—food and drink, warmth and shelter, a little love and a little laughter to help them to forget the darkness from which they so lately emerged and into which they will so soon descend ; of which, too, in their secret hearts they are all terrified. So quite naturally they prefer the romance and melody of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers to the stark grimness of much of the present day music. Rather will they wallow in the symphonies of Tschai-

kowsky, saturated with self-pity and culminating in attacks of musical delirium tremens ; excite their nerves with the intensely Jewish exuberance and sensuality of Wagner, or steep themselves in the Sunday-afternoon-in-the-Vicarage atmosphere of Beethoven's slow movements, than freeze in the cold neo-classicism of the *post-Petrouchka* Stravinsky, or puzzle their brains over the atonal Schönberg. "Can these bones live?" they ask.

Stravinsky, whose reminiscences, "*Chroniques de ma Vie*," make one wish that he would give up composing music and take to literature, says, "Music is the sole domain in which man can realize the present." Few, I imagine, will agree with him, but nevertheless music more than any other art is capable of expressing *état d'âme*. "I will not say with Plato that the soul is an harmony, but *harmonical* and hath its nearest sympathy into music," wrote Sir Thomas Browne. And when the soul expresses itself through music, that music *must*, as we have already seen, reflect to some extent the spirit of the age in which it is expressed.

Of all the present-day English composers, William Walton does, I think, best voice the spirit of his day. To say this is not to belittle the achievements of such fine musicians as, for instance, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Bax or Ireland. But Elgar belongs to the nineteenth century ; Vaughan Williams finds his spiritual home in a dim, grey country in which the sun seldom shines and whose inhabitants, shrinking from the vulgarity and turmoil of modern life, take refuge in refined folk-songs and quasi-religious mysticism ; Bax—to the writer at least—suggests the English climate at its worst, and Ireland the nostalgic melancholy of the unhappy land whose name he bears.

William Walton—whom I have never met, but whose music interests me so profoundly that I am setting down my rather



post-impressionistic reactions to it—has little or nothing in common with the above composers. His music is intensely individual ; it expresses the thoughts of one William Walton, for whom Wagner, Stravinsky and company might never have been born. Where outside influences are to be traced—an occasional suggestion of Schönberg, for instance—he has transmuted them into his own idiom. Strange, tortured music, this—the music of disintegration and death. Rarely does its composer forget the stress and turmoil of these troublous times and the spiritual bankruptcy of the nations and come out into the sunshine, indeed, when this tall, pale young man with a queer trick of clasping his hands together as if, like a mournful wraith, he were wringing them, acknowledges the applause of the crowd, one senses him as remote, bitter, disillusioned.

And how, one may well ask, can the creative genius feel otherwise than lonely, shut up in himself ? He sees Germany, where music and learning were once so revered and lovingly cultivated, ground under the heavy heel of Hitler, to whom the finer fruits of culture mean less than an extra battalion ; he sees in Russia the barbaric splendour and cruel squalor of the Tzarist *régime*—which at any rate gave birth to much beautiful music, great literature and the exquisite art of the Russian ballet—replaced by the rule of the Bolshevik butchers, and he sees his own country gone crazy over machines and sport : a country where the holder of records for speed on the road or in the air, football, tennis and cinema stars are treated like gods and royally rewarded ; a country in which music and painting take a back seat, and in which poetry is held in such small esteem that to many of the younger generation the name of Milton suggests nothing but a disinfectant. And he sees everywhere the rule of hate, each nation hating its neighbour with bitter, concentrated

hatred, and ruining its citizens in the endeavour to create more, and ever more, lethal weapons of destruction.

All this, it seems to me, has influenced Walton's genius. It is particularly apparent in the first movement of his symphony, which is nerve-racking music. One seems to hear shrieks of anguish from the victims of airplanes raining death from the skies ; the lamentations of poor peasants over their burnt homes, alternated, it is true, with bursts of real lyric beauty, but a strange, savage lyricism : the lyricism of the young animal rejoicing in its youth and strength, always a little cruel, a little inhuman. And through it all runs the despair and revolt of the composer over the general cataclysm which he feels is hard at hand and which he is powerless to avert. There is no self-pity in this music—the young of this generation loathe sloppiness—neither is there pity for the malady of the age. Walton can be grave, but never serene ; in the slow movement which, like his viola concerto, is deeply introspective, he broods over the agony of civilization and asks himself the eternal question : “ Why should these things be ? ” but he holds out no hope ; he has no philosophy of life to offer us. This almost unrelieved tragedy becomes at times almost unbearable ; one cannot live for so long solely on one's nerves. In the scherzo *con malizio* the same mood prevails, and the words of the Litany come to my mind, “ From all envy, hatred and malice good Lord deliver us.” The last movement, written some time after the first three movements, does not seem to me to be quite in the same mood. There are suggestions in it here and there of greater warmth and of harking back to older methods, notably in the admirably constructed fugal episode. But the whole work is knit together by the composer's inevitable, almost Gallic sense of form, the lack of which spoils so much English music. By the way, it would

be interesting to know if the use of the leading theme of this movement which Walton exploits so skilfully, and which happens to be the leitmotiv of the fourth act of Puccini's "*Manon Lescaut*," is intentional or not.

The Symphony, is I think, more successful than "*Belshazzar's Feast*." Both works have the same rhythmic violence ; in both, the composer shows the same easy command of every technical resource, but he is less happy in writing for the voice than for the orchestra. Since the maleficent influence of Wagner spread over Europe and sterilized so much promising talent, composers have gradually lost the art of writing intelligently for the voice. The composer of to-day knows only one musical instrument—the orchestra. The tyranny of the Wagnerian music-drama and the musical intoxication it produced in his followers killed the vocal tradition as surely as the four-square methods of Handel, carried on by the egregious Mendelssohn, killed the incomparable school of English music which had grown up under the Tudors. This was the more unfortunate as Wagner proved to be an isolated incident ; a culminating point like a mountain-top, a road leading nowhere.

Walton's music is absolutely devoid of any suggestion of that sensuousness, or rather, sensuality, with which the music of Wagner is so saturated, and which is the cause of his passionate popularity with erotic, over-sexed women, Jews and emotional people generally. It is, incidentally, interesting to learn that no less a composer than Sibelius says : "*Wagner is rude, brutal, vulgar and completely lacking in delicacy*" ! Walton is capable in his reflective moments of a certain cold, almost religious, austerity. But it has nothing in common with the quasi-religious hysteria of "*Parsifal*" ; the sensuous religiosity which suggests a dimly lighted, incense-clouded church, youthful servers in

scarlet cassocks and celibate priests yearning over attractive little choirboys in lace-trimmed surplices. Nor has it kinship with those curious, wholly English effusions known as "Church" music, turned out with such tireless industry by Stainer, Barnby, Walford Davies and their like.

Walton's beautiful viola concerto is a highly characteristic and intensely introspective work, and sometimes curiously wistful. It is not, however, for the ordinary viola player ; it needs a William Primrose. I like, too, the brilliant, bustling overture "Portsmouth Point," suggested by Rowlandson's well-known print of that name, but the worst of programme music is that you have to be told what it is meant to represent. We are informed that the overture is "a vivid picture of eighteenth-century humour, grossness and touches of sentiment here and there. In the background the sea is visible with a fleet of our 'wooden walls' getting under way." Had I heard it for the first time without the programme notes, I doubt if it would have conveyed all that to me. Rowlandson's print shows us exactly what he saw when he depicted it, and we cannot possibly read anything else into it. With music, however, you can imagine anything . . . or nothing. Be that as it may, "Portsmouth Point" is a boisterous, exhilarating piece of work. Walton has refrained from using folk-songs or sea-shanties. I dislike the folk-song school of composition which has been worked to death in England by "arty" composers who have nothing original of their own to say ; but in this case, had one or two well-known sea-songs been suggested, they might have helped to stimulate the imagination in calling up a picture of nautical life.

Walton is still very young and one feels that he has yet much to give the world. He cannot have exhausted that vein of pure

gold which produced "Façade," by far the most delightful example of gay, ironic, musical satire to be found in the whole repertory of the orchestra. His harmonic sense is, by the way, extraordinarily original and attractive, as also is his scoring. *A propos* of the latter, however, I feel that he is too fond of the brass instruments, and he uses the pedal point overmuch.

Music such as Walton's Symphony makes us ask ourselves if music has any future. Deeply interesting and original as it is, one cannot conceive that it, or, indeed, any of the music now being written, will ever become rooted in the affections of the music-lover in the same way as is the so-called *classical* music. Art which is truly great will appeal alike to the cultured and the uncultured : every one will find in it something for himself. It will be appreciated for reasons which vary according to the varying idiosyncrasies of human nature, but these different appreciations themselves prove its humanity and its vitality. Perhaps music has reached the point where we must realize that there is no new thing under the sun. Certainly the possibilities of the piano have been exhausted and melody can but be a slight variation on something that has already been written many times. Painting, too, has reached its zenith and is fast declining, and where shall we look for poets like unto Shakespeare, Milton and Keats ?

Perhaps our Western civilization is dying, and Walton is one of the earliest composers to voice its death-agony. When art and culture begin to decline in a nation, when its people lose touch with those spiritual values without which life has no meaning, and when materialism is everywhere triumphant, all past history teaches us that the end is in sight. And after all, what does it matter ? How many civilizations have disappeared in the comparatively brief space of time since man first appeared

upon the earth, and have been succeeded by others : “ One generation passeth and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever.” But civilizations take an unconscionable time a-dying, so there is plenty of time for Walton to finish his requiem.

Perhaps, three or four thousand years hence, some archæologist excavating on the site of some long-forgotten library of music will dig up the full score of Bach’s B Minor Mass and find—like the emissaries of Lorenzo de’ Medici, when they re-discovered Greek sculpture—that, archaic as Bach’s technique will appear to them, his music nevertheless represents the ultimate beauty : that he has expressed all man’s joys and sorrows, hopes and fears : all that life can mean to him : all that a problematical future existence can promise him.



MISS LILIAN BAYLIS





MISS LILLIAN BAYEIS.

## MISS LILIAN BAYLIS

*Introduced by Sybil Thorndike*

I THINK human beings are kinder and more charitable to-day than ever before—one finds an attitude of sympathy, and a desire to understand fellow-creatures that is growing, and I believe this comes from a sense of loneliness, because Faith and Hope seem to have left us, and we are, as it were, creatures without home, and must hold hands of sympathy, for the touch of brothers and sisters is the only thing we feel sure of. How invigorating, how energizing it is, therefore, to think of a woman of Faith like Lilian Baylis—to think of someone whose life is based on knowledge of a world greater than this that we cling to with such homesickness. Her work was informed by Faith and Hope, and the love of her kind that was born of these, was not the clinging together of creatures despairing, but an exhilarating sense of creative comradeship—hopeful, faithful, sure. It is in her Faith that Lilian was great. All her work came from this, all she was, came from this; and we thank God for her.

## MISS LILIAN BAYLIS

"Not prompted, as in our degenerate days,  
By low ambition and the thirst of praise."

COWPER. *Table Talk.*

I AM seldom suitably impressed by Important People. Serious politicians, pompous peers, captains of industry, and, above all, famous singers and actors, far from filling me with the respectful admiration which their situations merit, merely give me an impish delight in pulling the strings that make the puppets dance. Once only since my childhood have I been conscious of my own insignificance when meeting a celebrity and that, oddly enough, was when I first met Lilian Baylis, who is utterly simple and devoid of any trace of arrogance.

I was introduced to her at the Old Vic by Nigel Playfair—I was staying with him at the time—and when we got home he said to his wife, "We went round to see Lilian after the show, and for the first time in his life Percy had nothing to say; he was like a new boy having breakfast with the headmaster."

I do not know why it should have been so. Perhaps it was the sub-conscious tribute of the *esprit moqueur*, the *vanitas-vanitatum* attitude, to the passionate sincerity of a being obsessed body and soul by the work to which she has dedicated her life, and serenely sure of its value to the community; perhaps because when she fixes you with her eyes it certainly seems as if she were undressing your soul.

Lilian Baylis, on her mother's side, is of yeoman ancestry.

Her great-grandfather, Elias Konss, left the pleasant Rhine country in 1769 to seek his fortune in England. He changed his name to Cons, married and produced a son, Frederick, who became a great friend of John Brinsmead, the piano-maker, and made the first ivory keys for him ; he also did some work for Broadwood. The yellow keys of that old Brinsmead on which you can still "move a thin ghost of music" were very likely made by Frederick. In due time he took to himself as wife Esther Goodair, the daughter of a mill-owner and cotton-spinner of Stockport, who, by the way, was one of the first manufacturers to install machinery in the place of hand labour. Esther presented him with seven children, one of them, Elizabeth Lieber, became a professional singer and pianist. She married a brother artist named Newton Baylis, and Lilian is their daughter. Another of Frederick's children, Emma, played an important part in Lilian's life and in the history of the Old Vic.

Both Lilian's parents being singers, she was brought up in a musical atmosphere. She was taught the violin by Tiplady Carrodus, and her brother was an excellent 'cellist. On Sunday evenings after church—her father sang in the choir of St. Augustine's, Queen's Gate, where *his* father was a sidesman for over fifty years—they would gather round the piano and make music, as musical people were wont to do in the days before you could "get culture," as the Americans put it, by the simple process of pressing a button. And every three years came the Handel Festival, that strange orgy of mass music which so thrilled the Victorians and in which both Lilian's parents took part as chorus leaders. Lilian was often taken to rehearsals and attended all the performances. She played the violin in public when she was only twelve years old, and her brother the 'cello when he was only ten.

## GEORGIAN PORTRAITS

About this time a ladies' orchestra was organized to play in the St. James's Restaurant—the famous "Jimmies"—which was part of the old St. James's Hall in Piccadilly. It was called William Graves' Orchestra, and was, I believe, the earliest restaurant orchestra known in London. Lilian was engaged to play in it at three pounds a week. Her parents, who gave concerts before she was born, had formed themselves into a small concert party: the "Konss-Baylis Family Entertainers." They were very successful and engagements poured in. One of their most popular shows was one which they called the "Gipsy Revellers," in which they dressed as gipsies and sang and danced. It was hard work. Lilian remembers one occasion when the family had a fortnight's engagement at the Aquarium at Brighton, and when the curtain fell at five o'clock, she and her mother had to rush to catch a train to London to play at a concert at St. James's Hall with Antoinette Stirling and the well-known violinist, Tividar Nachez, who had already appeared when they got there, and later in the evening going on to play at the Austrian Embassy.

When Lilian was seventeen the family had a good offer to go on tour; not, if you please, a pleasant provincial tour, giving their entertainment in Town Halls and staying in country inns, but a tour to South Africa! It was a tremendous undertaking for these modest entertainers. In the '90s ocean travel—unless you travelled *en luxe*—was not at all comfortable, and there were no railway and motor systems linking up the whole country as there are nowadays. Arrived in South Africa, their troubles soon began. The small impresario who had persuaded them to go with him, promising them gold galore in that Eldorado, went bankrupt a few weeks after their arrival, leaving them stranded. But you couldn't down the Baylis family!

They set to work giving their entertainment anywhere they could find a room large enough for the purpose ; in Town Halls, Court Houses, hotels ; even in chapels. They designed their own handbills, sending them to the postmasters of the various small towns in which they were to appear. The handbills were distributed by a bell-ringer ringing his bell and heralding their advent. They travelled as best they could, generally in bullock-wagons, in which they rode over 4000 miles during their tour.

In the intervals between travelling they played in the big towns. At Durban, Lilian was engaged one Christmas to play in the pantomime *and* in the orchestra, which she managed by racing down to the orchestra when she was not wanted on the stage ! Nothing came amiss to this amazing family. They went to the Rand—staying there five years—where Lilian organized dancing classes, giving lessons to the daughters of the rich mine-owners and officials. Most of her pupils ended up by marrying millionaires. She also formed a children's orchestra, herself playing violin, guitar or banjo—it was all the same to her. She lived in South Africa all through the eventful years which saw the Jameson Raid and the troubles that led to the Boer War, and during her stay knew well nearly all the South African millionaires and notabilities, including Jameson. And in South Africa she might well have remained, eventually herself marrying a millionaire, had it not been that after seven years in the country her health broke down and she was obliged to return to England for a rest.

Here I must digress a little to speak of Lilian's aunt, Emma Cons, another remarkable woman, but for whom, indeed, the Old Vic as it exists to-day would never have come into being. Emma Cons was born a Socialist, using the word in its best sense. Like St. Francis, she could not see suffering,

wretchedness, corruption, without a burning desire to heal it, and this sympathy was without any taint of spiritual arrogance. She might have said with Sir Thomas Browne, "I thank God, amongst those millions of vices I do inherit and hold from Adam I have escaped one, and that a mortal enemy to Charity, the first and father-sin, not only of man, but of the devil : Pride."

Emma Cons was an ardent advocate of Women's Suffrage and was one of the women members of the first London County Council. She was a schoolfellow of that pioneer in the Housing Question, Octavia Hill, and together they started housing reform in Marylebone. But as you cannot have two generals in one camp, Emma Cons transferred her activities to South London. This is not the place to describe the admirable work done by these two women. It is of interest to us chiefly because it led to Lilian's connection with the Old Vic.

The Old Vic had had a long and chequered career. It was founded in 1816 and named the "Royal Coburg" in honour of Princess Charlotte of Wales. From the first it found itself in financial trouble, for the Lambeth quarter in the early nineteenth century was, according to Besant, noted for its "immense number of streams, ditches and ponds." The site of the theatre was little better than a swamp, which made building operations difficult and expensive. In 1818 it opened its doors with "A New Melodramatic Spectacle called Trial by Battle; or Heaven defend the Right. After which a grand Asiatic Ballet called Alzora and Necine, or, The Fairy Gift. To conclude with a new and splendid harlequinade called Midnight Revelry, or, Harlequin and Comus." Curiously enough, the prices of admission to this formidable entertainment were, considering the relative value of money in 1818 and 1937, higher than are theatre prices to-day. It must have needed some courage to visit the "Coburg," for

the approaches to it were surrounded by swamps, ditches and market-gardens and you ran the risk of being drowned on your way there. *The Times* in its comments on the new theatre suggested that the footpath should be fenced in for part of the way "against the accident of persons in the dark falling into the marshes." Then, too, the whole neighbourhood was infested with roughs and footpads. The company which had just built the Waterloo Bridge did its best to improve matters by providing extra patrols and lighting.

In 1833 the "Coburg" changed its name to the "Royal Victoria." The story of the "Old Vic," as it has long been called; its ups and downs; the famous actors who have played there; its degradation and its renaissance under Lilian Baylis have been told by another writer.

It was Emma Cons who set its feet on the ladder of fame. She had conceived the idea of opening a music-hall where only non-alcoholic drinks should be sold, and as the Old Vic happened to be standing empty she induced some of her wealthy friends to put up the money to take it on lease. It was opened on Boxing Day, 1880, with a variety entertainment. At this time and, indeed, for some years after Emma Cons took up the Housing Question, there were no popular tea and coffee-shops. She was deeply interested when John Pearce opened the first coffee-stall, and she herself opened the first coffee-shop for poor people. It was just off Drury Lane and was called "The Eat and Comfort."

As might have been expected in that drink-sodden neighbourhood, the Old Vic's success was only moderate, but they held on in spite of endless difficulties. After a time Emma Cons, who had started the enterprise partly as a hobby, began to realize that running it was a whole-time job. When Lilian Baylis returned to England in 1898, she found her aunt worn out with over-



work and worry and—in spite of her own need of rest—agreed to take over the management of the theatre. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

For a time she did not change the kind of entertainment ; the weekly programme consisted of Lectures, Temperance Meetings, Ballad Concerts and Opera Recitals, with Music Hall shows on Saturdays. In order to get the boys and girls to attend the lectures she gave them a short film when the lecture was over, so the Old Vic was one of the earliest pictures houses in London. Taste was more simple in those days. People were able to enjoy looking at pictures of scenery and of foreign countries unrelieved by thrills. Nowadays a desert merely suggests a suitable spot for an air crash, and to show the sea without storm and shipwreck is unthinkable.

These picture shows proved so popular that Lilian decided to give an entire programme of pictures weekly, and although the prices of admission were only twopence and a penny, in two years she had cleared over £2000.

Year by year the Old Vic grew in popularity. It now had its regular audiences for the various types of entertainment, the opera recitals being particularly popular. Lilian, who has two ruling passions—opera and Shakespeare—wanted to give entire operas, but one of the oddest of our wholly idiotic licensing laws is that in order to do so you must have a dramatic licence, and this was not granted to the Old Vic until shortly before the war. So she turned to Shakespeare, and in the spring of 1914 formed her first company, with a strong committee consisting chiefly of leading actors. Shakespeare was quite at home on the Old Vic stage. Many a famous player has trodden its boards as Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard II or Lear ; indeed, the ghosts of Edmund Kean, Booth and Macready, must surely haunt it.

September 1914, when she had arranged to start operations, found the world engrossed in a tragedy grimmer than any of Shakespeare's, and only Matheson Lang and his wife were able to help her. After the production of three plays, Ben Greet joined the company and remained with it for four years. During this period they produced twenty-four of Shakespeare's plays, including "Hamlet" in its entirety—given to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday—twelve non-Shakespeare plays and "Elijah" as an opera. The celebration of Shakespeare's birthday has been kept up ever since and it was at the one held in 1936 that Greet made his last appearance, playing Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice." He was ill at the time and died two weeks later.

By the end of nine years every one of Shakespeare's plays had been produced at the Old Vic, a feat which the less accessible and far more expensive theatre at Stratford-on-Avon has not yet accomplished. But, although the Old Vic is the home of Shakespeare, he is not in exclusive possession. The repertory includes plays by most of the English classic writers ; Restoration comedies ; Nativity and Morality plays ; the works of Ibsen and Tchekov, besides several outstanding modern plays. Many famous actors, when not engaged elsewhere, played at the Old Vic—among them Ellen Terry, Edith Evans, Sybil and Russell Thorndike, Ernest Milton, Charles Laughton, Laurence Olivier, Henry Kendall and John Gielgud—and if you look at Lilian's collection of old playbills you will see the names of a dozen actors now popular in the West End. The value to a young actor of belonging to a permanent and first-rate stock company must be inestimable ; in no other school can he learn his job so thoroughly. The magnificent production of "Hamlet"—without cuts—with that virile, popular, but slightly unpoetical

actor, Laurence Olivier as the Prince, will be fresh in the memories of my readers. Perhaps Olivier was a little too virile ; such a Hamlet, one feels, would have killed Claudius before the end of the First Act ! Curiously enough, the play did not seem too long. The absence of any sense of hurry made one forget time, and the story unfolded itself in a way which is quite impossible when so many of the exquisite lines are omitted.

The Old Vic audiences love Shakespeare. After all, the ordinary playgoer of his period did not differ so very essentially from the playgoer of to-day. I have long been convinced that the taste of the masses is for the most part infinitely better than that of those who provide their amusements, it is extraordinary how they respond to good plays and good music. But many theatrical producers and nearly all the magnates of the cinema industry at Hollywood seem to take it for granted that their patrons are for the most part half-witted. And the worst of it is that the more you play down to the public the lower its mentality becomes. Lilian Baylis is far too intelligent and conscientious to make this stupid mistake ; she respects her public and gives them only the best. And, she understands the difference between the broad, if occasionally coarse, humour of the Restoration period and the subtly suggestive manner in which sexual questions are treated in some modern plays. Strange to say, many people who swallow this type of play without a qualm, were shocked at "The Country Wife." "Nasty, dirty stuff if not handled properly," she said, and she saw that it *was* handled properly, for she superintends every detail of her productions and nothing escapes her. There she sits in her box at rehearsals, benevolent but Argus-eyed. She knows exactly what she wants and sees that she gets it.

Let us now turn to that side of her activities which most

interests me personally—opera and ballet. Even before the Old Vic was granted a dramatic licence she had given opera there. The early repertoire consisted of Verdi's most popular operas, "Carmen," "Faust," "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci," and English Ballad operas, and, on gala occasions, "Lohengrin" or "Tannhäuser." They were rather rough-and-ready performances; shirt-sleeve opera, as Mrs. Patrick Campbell called them. Space at the theatre was so limited that the rehearsals took place in an old, disused public-house, full of enormous baskets of stage "props," which the company used instead of chairs. The musical director was that clever musician, Charles Corri, who was connected with the Old Vic for over thirty years. He worked miracles in arranging big operatic scores for the tiny orchestra, of which some of the players could play two or three instruments, and in which missing instruments were filled in on the piano. The popularity of these operas spurred them on to higher things, and in 1920 they ventured on Mozart, and even gave "Tristan and Isolde," though the score—skilfully reduced as it was—was only a shadow of the original. But they were fighting against fearful odds. They had no real company; the principals were engaged for single performances and the chorus consisted of amateurs and was never rehearsed with the orchestra, the reason being that orchestral rehearsals took place in the morning when the players accepted reduced rates and the chorus were not available until after their working hours. Then, too, no opera got more than two rehearsals, the principals being supposed to know their parts before they came. Last year at Sadler's Wells there were two hundred rehearsals of "Falstaff."

It was in 1927 that Lilian Baylis saw her great chance and seized it. Sadler's Wells, which was opened in 1683 as a "Musick House," in the days when Islington was a country spa, was

standing derelict and deserted. Gone were the days when the citizens of London flocked there to drink the waters ; to be entertained by the dulcimer and to dance to the pipe and tabor. During its long history it had had innumerable ups and downs, and had kept pace gallantly with the changes in men and manners. Grimaldi, Kean, Phelps, Dibden, Carey, Fechter, had all played there ; it had given pantomimes, " Aquatic " drama, performing dogs, melo-drama and Shakespeare, but now its glory had departed, its ways were desolate. *De profundis exclamavit* and Lilian Baylis heard its voice. Her ambition, as we have seen, had long been to give first-class opera at popular prices ; not for short seasons, but continuously. She consulted her Governing Body and one of the most valuable members, Sir Reginald Rowe, who, being a poet, had vision, supported her enthusiastically. The Lord will provide, they said, and bought the old theatre.

They were asking a good deal of the Lord. Still more of their fellow countrymen, for few of the moneyed class in England are sufficiently educated and intelligent to interest themselves in the finer flowers of civilization. Hospitals, football fields, public wash-houses, armaments—yes ; there you get something for your money, but to squeeze a few pounds out of them for mere æsthetic ideals is a task which would tax Hercules. The Old Vic, for all its enormous following, does not—and never has—paid its way. With prices ranging from sixpence to seven and sixpence—as at Sadler's Wells—even a " capacity house " barely pays the cost of production, at any rate when plays are produced and rehearsed well enough to satisfy Lilian Baylis, who, by the way, is never satisfied. And now behold her with an opera-house to run. Proud of the responsibility, too.

It was about this time that she was knocked down by a car.

The young policeman who helped her, bruised and shaken, to her feet recognized the distinguished victim and exclaimed in an awestruck voice, "Why ! it's Miss Baylis of the Old Vic !" "And Sadler's Wells, young man," snapped out Lilian !

We have been told for many years that opera is a dying form of art. Perhaps it is, but it is taking an unconscionable time a-dying. Personally I do not think it is in any danger. True there have been, since the war, no new operas of any importance, but neither has any other epoch-making music been written. Opera, at its best, is an unique combination of music, drama, dancing and scenic art, and I cannot imagine that it will ever permanently lose its appeal. It is regarded as an exotic in England because it has long been associated with an annual and very expensive season at Covent Garden, where Italian, French and German operas are sung in their own language by famous stars. Certainly there have been many seasons of "English" opera but there has never been any pretence of permanency about them.

Now in opera-producing countries where the opera houses are subsidized, opera is always *national*. Thus at the Paris *Opéra*, the *Opéra Comique* and the various provincial houses, French is invariably used ; in Italy—Italian ; in Germany—German, and so on. And in all three countries the translations of foreign librettos are every bit as bad as those one generally hears in England. To hear, for instance, "Carmen" in German, or "Tristan" in French, is quite as unnatural as are the same works sung in English. Naturally, most operas sound better in the language in which they were written ; not all, however. I much prefer "Falstaff" in the admirable translation used at Sadler's Wells to hearing it in Italian. The essentially English story becomes infinitely more convincing. And the librettos of "Figaro," "Die Meistersinger," "Tristan," "Lohengrin," and

many other operas suffer no more when translated into English than they do in any other translation.

Opera is necessarily an expensive form of art. The so-called "Grand" season at Covent Garden, even with the high prices charged for seats, rarely does more than just pay its way, and the various autumn seasons which are given from time to time almost always result in a deficit. Unless, therefore, it is state-aided, or supported by rich music-lovers, its existence must be precarious. This being the case, it is all the more wonderful that we have in Sadler's Wells a truly national opera of a high and constantly improving standard of efficiency, *without subsidy or endowment of any kind*. It is even more wonderful that some of the millionaires who pour out money for purposes which, however worthy of support, are purely material, have not sufficient vision and sense of historical perspective to get together and place the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells on a proper footing and free Lilian Baylis—who in creating them has done a greater service to her country than any patriotic title-hunter who gives it a battleship or a fleet of murder-dealing airplanes—from the anxiety which is her constant companion.

It is not by the excellence and number of its charitable institutions that a country earns deathless fame. We remember "the glory that was Greece" because of Homer, Plato, Socrates, and her athletic prizemen still live for us only because they were caught by her incomparable artists, "for ever panting and for ever young." Bach and Goethe, Michaelangelo, Titian and Verdi will continue to delight the world long after the pinchbeck dictators of Germany and Italy, with their sorry pomp, are one with Nineveh and Tyre.

There is something about a *national* opera house in which every one is of the same nationality and where all work together

year in and year out, which you do not get in a short season, however brilliant the artists. When a dozen or so famous singers of different nationalities are got together for a few weeks it is impossible to obtain the homogeneity, the team-work, which you get in, let us say, the *Opéra Comique* or *La Scala*. Sadler's Wells has an atmosphere of intimacy, not only on the stage but in the audience. Only a fixed policy—such as one used to get at the Lyceum, Drury Lane, the Haymarket and the St. James's Theatre—will give this atmosphere. Of course I do not for a moment underestimate the thrill supreme voices can give one. To hear Melba and Caruso singing together, when at their best, was an unforgettable sensation ; it did not matter what they sang ; the sheer sensuous, intoxicating beauty of sound was enough. But such voices are rare. We have not, perhaps, in England the *sens du théâtre* with which Italian singers are born ; it is above all a Latin gift ; but operatic singing can only be acquired through operatic experience, and as we are rich in the first essential for opera—beautiful voices—to turn the owners of those voices into first-class operatic artists is only a matter of time. It is amazing how far the work has been accomplished by Lilian Baylis.

Sadler's Wells and the Old Vic are not the only gifts which this wonderful woman has given to England. She has founded, after overcoming countless difficulties, a truly National Ballet. Now if opera *chez nous* is less heavenborn than is our tradition of poetry, it is quite otherwise with dancing. Diaghilef once told me that the English talent for it was at least equal to that of any other nation, always excepting his own people to whom dancing is second nature. At Sadler's Wells the working conditions of the Russian Imperial Ballet have been closely copied. The dancers are taken as children and taught their art thoroughly in the ballet school, which has already created some stars of the



first magnitude. All the great ballets are given there, staged to perfection and rehearsed to the last detail.

Ballet is getting more and more popular in England, especially with the younger generation. That it should be so is a tribute to their intelligence. Ballet stimulates their imagination and awakens the sense of beauty. It is not handicapped by the ridiculous libretti which spoil so many operas, nor is its action held up by the necessity of providing opportunities for singers to show off. It transports you to an enchanting world of dreams where anything might happen, for in that happy land of illusion the impossible is true. All the *intelligentsia* of London are now to be seen at Sadler's Wells on ballet nights.

If the three fairy gifts Lilian Baylis has given to her country do not seem of sufficient value to our Philistine Government and material millionaires for them to see that she is enabled to carry on without anxiety, there is another aspect of her work which should surely appeal to them. She keeps three companies going nearly all the year round—Drama, Opera and Ballet—and thus gives permanent employment to a large number of people. Her desire is to give a yearly contract, ten months' work, one month's holiday and one month's rehearsal—but this wish has yet to be gratified. Lilian is convinced that somehow or other the Lord will provide and that he will soften the heart of Pharaoh. She has the faith which moves mountains, but which, as I pointed out to her, is so singularly impotent as regards millionaires and politicians. She is, however, a convinced Christian—alas ! how few Christians *are* convinced—so she goes on hoping all things.

It is a splendid thing, this selfless devotion to a great object ; this capacity to work and plan for the future so that others may reach the promised land which you yourself glimpse from afar,

knowing that the chances of reaching journey's end are but slight. Lilian is an autocrat ; she has to be. She can be quite ruthless when necessary. " Your voice is going, dear, I can't keep you on any longer," she will say to a singer. But if that singer needs help, she will give it, never letting her left hand know what her right hand doeth. And she is infinitely kind to the sick and sorry in her companies. Honours she has received. Queen Mary has visited the Old Vic five times ; Oxford conferred on her the honorary degree of Master of Arts ; Birmingham that of Hon. LL.D. ; and she has the Order of the Companion of Honour, whose motto is, " In action faithful, in Honour clear."

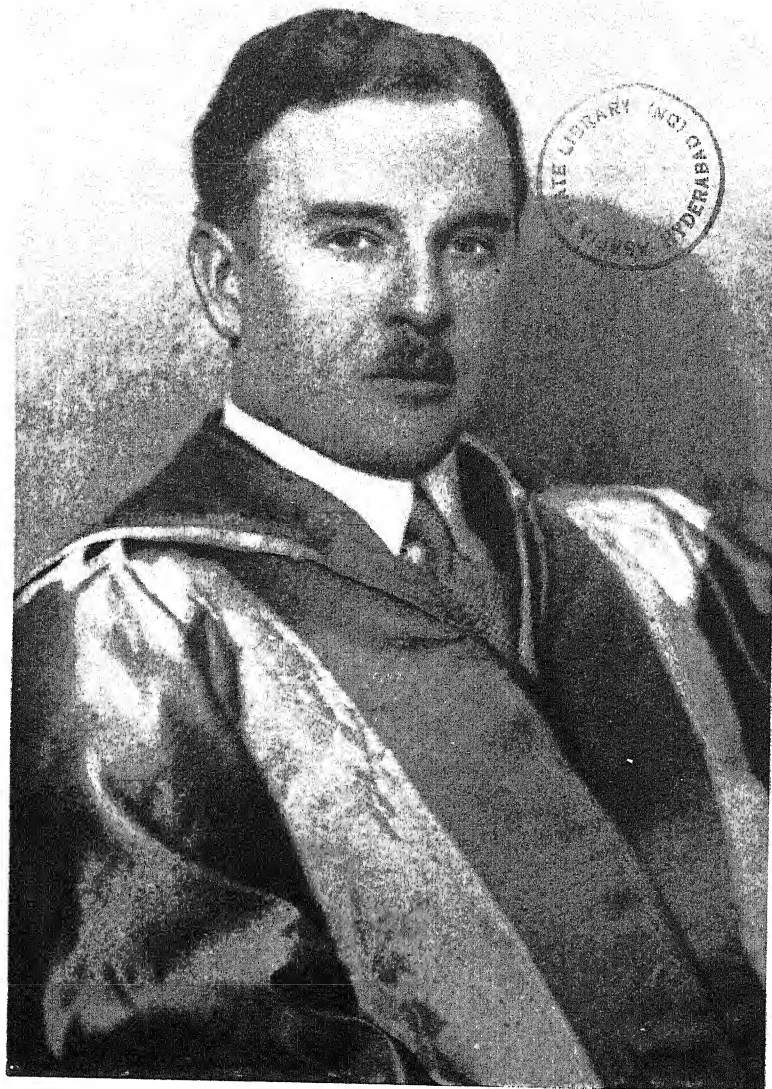
At Cambridge the Old Vic company was invited to give " Everyman " in the exquisite chapel of King's College—the first occasion on which a play had been given there since the days of Queen Elizabeth—and the visit of the company to Elsinore to play " Hamlet " will be fresh in the memory of every one. Covent Garden has borrowed singers from her on many occasions. On the last, Sir Thomas Beecham, who wanted Edith Coates, would take no denial.

Almost any evening, either at Sadler's Wells or the Old Vic, you may see this elderly great lady, erect, indomitable ; facing all difficulties ; watching, planning, hoping. Let us pray that before the sun goes down on her joys and sorrows some intelligent " Lord Nuffield " will have the vision to realize that man does not live by bread alone, and make her dreams come true.

I have not changed anything in the above sketch as my old friend Miss Baylis read it a few days before her death and was looking forward to its publication.



DR. GEORGE THALBEN-BALL



DR. THALBEN-BAIL

## DR. GEORGE THALBEN-BALL

*Introduced by Edwin Evans*

“THE organ is the instrument that tells the truth.” That was one of my father’s favourite sayings when I was a boy. He was the first Fellow created by the (now Royal) College of Organists when it was founded by Limpus and others. In the first year of its existence only two organists became Fellows, and by virtue of the alphabet his name appeared before that of Holloway, the only other successful candidate. The first home I can remember was a double-fronted house with two large rooms either side of the hall, each divided in two by folding doors. At least I saw one, and inferred the other, which I never saw, for it was occupied to within a few feet of the front window by a three-manual organ on which my father would give recitals to an audience in the room across the passage. The organ dominated the house. Its bellows and a gas engine usurped a considerable portion of the basement, to the detriment of household arrangements. Certainly the king of instruments ruled over the realm in which I spent my childhood. My father was the organist at Spanish Place. His closest friends were Turpin, Silas and others, organists like himself. He gave recitals at the Bow and Bromley Institute, then an important centre for organists. Once he deputized there in an emergency for Guilmant, suddenly indisposed. If I mention these autobiographical details it is merely to show that, though my

attendances at organ recitals have become rare, I can never approach the subject of the organ as a stranger. It is in my blood.

What my father meant by that saying needs perhaps a little explanation. He was a contrapuntist of the old school and Bach was his god. Even Schumann represented to him in those days what modernism is to many musicians to-day. Abuse of the *espressivo* style, whether in composition or performance, was to him an abomination. He regarded it as a kind of musical adulteration, facilitating imposture. By its means inferior craftsmanship, in composition or performance, could be palmed off as the real thing. But on the organ, except by such devices as the *vox humana* stop, the very use of which stamped the offender, such imposture was impossible. An organ pipe either spoke or remained silent. It could not gloss over a poor phrase with a sentimental *portamento*. It unmasked the impostor at once. It told the truth about him and about the music he was playing. Even in later days, when my father's views and tastes became much broader, he still maintained that attitude. He had then become a copious arranger for his instrument, and I suggested to him that the Finale of Glazunov's Sixth Symphony would make a good organ piece—as it did, except at one point where the reappearance of the first subject in C major is heralded by the dominant chord of E major. For my father that spoilt the whole movement. He simply could not bring himself to give the lie to the very rafters still clamouring for E major.

Unfortunately, such virtuous austerity has ceased to be common among organists. As already hinted, I am not a frequent listener at organ recitals. One of the things that have alienated me is the tendency to smudge climaxes for the sake of dynamic effect—to make the summit of a polyphonic building-up, fugal or other, sound like a passage from one of those absurd

compositions which purport to imitate a thunderstorm. All clarity is gone. Though the organist may be playing the notes correctly—at least we will give him the benefit of the doubt, for we cannot know—the contrapuntal threads are tangled into a sonorous knot which the ear has to unravel if it is to take any further interest in the performance. The organist has an instrument which is capable of presenting music with the utmost clarity. In this it is, for instance, far superior to the piano, with its sham *sostenuto* and its inflectional *demi-teintes*. Why so many organists should willingly offer up this inestimable advantage to the false god of “effect” passes my understanding. There are, of course, many honourable exceptions, but one has to know of them first. If one does not know the player, an organ recital is beset with risk.

The present reaction against the sentimental excesses of romanticism, and the resultant contrapuntal tendency in present-day music provide a splendid opportunity for the organ as the truth-telling instrument. Despite brave efforts on the part of some composer-organists, mostly French, its very nature was opposed to its accommodating itself to so-called impressionism, but the style which has succeeded that phase favours the organ for the same reasons which have caused many composers to prefer woodwind to strings as being less prone to wallow in romantic sentiment. For that reason the chapter which follows is well named “The Renaissance of the Organ.”



## DR. GEORGE THALBEN-BALL

### *The Renaissance of the Organ*

“There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voiced choir below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness through mine ear  
Dissolve me into ecstasies  
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.”

MILTON, *Il Penseroso*.

THE organ, which at one time held so high a place in the affections of the English people, has for many years been under a cloud. No instrument has been more sung by poets and writers :

“*Et de tous instrumens le roi  
Dirai-je ici, comme je crois, orgue,*”

wrote Guillaume de Machault in the fourteenth century, and Montaigne, Pascal, Balzac, Victor Hugo, Lamartine and Browning have all chanted its praises. Berlioz, too, the father of modern orchestration, wrote :

“*L’orgue et l’orchestre sont rois tous les deux, ou plutôt l’un est empereur et l’autre pape ; leur mission n’est pas la même ; leurs intérêts sont trop vastes et trop divers pour être confondus.*”

For centuries the organ has been identified with the services of the Church which in the good, or, as you like it, bad old days, stood for all that was best in the life of the nation : its art, its music, its literature, its education, even its amusements, for the

modern theatre is a direct descendant of the medieval "mysteries" and morality plays.

But it is precisely this close association with the Church that has caused the organ to drift aside from the main stream of musical life in England. The age of faith has passed. The Church no longer stands for culture; rather the reverse. It has long since ceased to employ painters and sculptors to adorn its habitations; its music is for the most part deplorable, and, judging from the way its exquisite liturgy is rendered and the diction of its priests, it is wholly indifferent to the great literary tradition handed down to it by Cranmer and the translators of the Bible. Roman Catholics tell us that all its troubles are due to its separation from "Mother Church," but this is far from being the case, for in Roman Catholic churches the world over the services are even more deplorable from an æsthetic point of view.

And so to hundreds of thousands of people in these rather pagan days the word organ calls to mind unattractive and uncomfortable churches; dull sermons; long Psalms droned to hackneyed Anglican chants with no attempt at expression, diction, or feeling for the line of the poetry; badly sung anthems by third-rate composers; sentimental hymns expressing the yearning of their writers for "Paradise" or "Jerusalem the Golden with milk and honey blest" (undeterred by the fact that their hearts and mind "sink oppressed" at the contemplation of such a diet), a voluntary which, however well played, they associate with the relief they experience at the termination of the boring proceedings and the prospect of lunch.

The organ, however, like the harpsichord, which for nearly a century after the modern pianoforte had carried all before it, was regarded merely in the light of an interesting survival of the

past, is beginning to lift up its head again. Its renaissance began in France towards the end of last century, led by Guilmant, Saint-Saëns, Widor and César Franck, who were not only brilliant players but composers of organ music which broke away from the dull, "churchy," and almost exclusively fugal tradition which had dominated the organ world since the death of Bach, and which—especially that of César Franck—is of real significance. To-day there is in France an equally brilliant group which includes Vierne,<sup>1</sup> Duruflé, Bonnet, and that musical genius, Marcel Dupré, who, indeed, takes rank with the stars of the piano and violin world.

It is curious that this renaissance should have arisen in France where the organ has never played a very considerable part in the musical life of the people. In England we have far more and infinitely finer instruments and a tradition of church music and musicians of much greater importance than that of France. But we had got into a rut and when this happens to us we are apt to stay there indefinitely, unlike the French, whose restless intelligent minds abominate ruts and who invariably leave us lagging hopelessly behind in artistic matters. At long last, however, we generally follow the example of our stimulating neighbours and we have now a number of organists the best of whom are fully equal to the best French players.

George Thalben-Ball is not only one of the greatest living organists, but one of the greatest of all time; he is now as supreme in the organ world of England as is Marcel Dupré in France. Both are virtuosi of the first rank, and if Thalben-Ball decides to give himself up definitely to the career of an organ virtuoso his fame will soon be equally world-wide. In Paris his reputation is already established.

<sup>1</sup> Vierne died in June 1937.

He is a young man—not much over forty—and, notwithstanding the fact that he was born in Sydney, and that his father subsequently became a naturalized American citizen for business purposes, he is English of the English. He might easily never have been heard of in after-life for, like the infant in *Trovatore*, he was stolen from his parents. They were returning to England from New Zealand, and at Colombo a boat laden with peaches came alongside the ship, and the little boy gazed longingly at them with all the natural greed of his five summers. Attracted by his golden curls, the natives invited him to come down to the boat and help himself, and kept him hidden for two days. After frantic searching he was found by a sailor and restored to his distracted parents.

From his earliest years he was passionately fond of music, especially the organ, and it soon became evident that he possessed musical genius, a very different thing from a mere love of music. Half the tragedies of unsuccessful musicians and artists are due to the fatal error of believing that love for an art implies the talent necessary to succeed in it. Thalben-Ball was born with that natural technique which can never be acquired by even the most infinite capacity for taking pains. There was no question of any other profession for him than that of music, so he was sent to the Royal College of Music where he studied under Sir Walter Parratt, Franklyn Taylor, Stanford and Parry. Like Dupré, he intended to become a solo-pianist, indeed, he made a successful *début* as one, playing Rachmaninoff's Second Concerto—its first performance in England, apart from the composer's—at a London Symphony Concert. But the organ was his real love and he soon returned to it, gaining his practical experience at various London churches.

In 1918 Sir—then Dr.—Walford Davies resigned his position

as organist of the Temple Church. His predecessor, Dr. E. J. Hopkins, had, during his long reign of over fifty years, made the Temple services famous and Davies had worthily carried on the tradition. Every one thought that some organist of established reputation would be chosen to succeed him, but it happened that Lord Muir Mackenzie was then a member of the choir committee which is chosen from the members of the two Inns. He and his brother, Montagu Mackenzie, who was a Bencher of the Middle Temple, were accomplished musicians and excellent critics, and Lord Muir Mackenzie was Warden of Winchester College. They visited numerous cathedrals and churches noted for their musical services, taking stock of choir and organist. One day they happened to hear Thalben-Ball play and were deeply impressed. After making his acquaintance they decided that they need search no further. "This is the man for us," said Lord Muir Mackenzie. Not without opposition the Benchers of the two "Honourable Societies" were persuaded to endorse this opinion. Lord Muir Mackenzie's daughter, who was an excellent violinist, married the well-known pianist, Mark Hambourg.

For a church musician there could hardly be a more attractive position than that of organist of the Temple. He has a beautiful and historic church in cloistered surroundings; he is highly considered and given a free hand as regards the music; he need not be overworked, for there are only two services a week—the usual Sunday morning service and another at three in the afternoon, and the church is closed during the Long Vacation, which lasts from the end of July to the first week in October.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thalben-Ball, however, is so keen on keeping up the high standard of the Temple music that he holds more than double the number of choir practices called for by his contract.

He can lunch every Sunday with the Benchers of either the Middle or Inner Temple and enjoy the society of some of the most intellectual and cultured men in London and their distinguished guests, and he has the joy of playing on what I consider to be, perhaps, the most beautiful organ in the world—and I have heard nearly all of the most famous organs. In size it does not, of course, compare with very many others, but the quality and sweetness of its tone are unique : it is a musical instrument, not a bag of tricks.

It has had a stormy and interesting history. During the reign of Charles II two famous organ-builders were working in England—Bernard Schmidt, who came from Germany, and John Harris and his son Renatus or René. Harris was an Englishman who had fled to France during the troubled times of the Civil War and returned to England immediately after the Restoration. Of Smith Dr. Burney writes : “ Bernard Schmidt, as the Germans write the name, brought over with him from Germany, of which country he was a native, two nephews, Gerard and Bernard, as his assistants ; and to distinguish him from these, as well as to express the reverence due to his abilities which placed him at the head of his profession, he was called ‘ Father Smith.’ ”

It is not known in what year Smith came to England, but it must have been before the Restoration. The first organ he built here was for Whitehall Chapel which Pepys mentions under the date 8th July, 1660.

“ 8th (Lord’s Day) To White Hall Chapel, where I got in with ease by going before the Lord Chancellor with Mr. Kipps. Here I heard very good music, the first time that I ever remember to have heard the organs and singing men in surplices in my life.”

Smith's fame grew rapidly and King Charles appointed him his "organ-maker in ordinary" and allotted him apartments in Whitehall. Harris, too, acquired a great reputation and he and his son René proved formidable rivals to Smith, especially in the famous "battle of the organs" at the Temple.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century—about 1682—the Societies of the Temple decided to have in their church the most complete and beautiful organ that money could buy. They had been in treaty with Smith and were on the point of giving him the contract when Harris—who had some warm friends among the Benchers of the Inner Temple—was introduced to their notice. Both Smith and Harris were backed by so many powerful supporters and eminent organists that the Benchers did not know how to choose between them. They therefore proposed, as is recorded by an entry in the Temple books, dated February 1682, that :

"If each of these excellent artists would set up an organ in one of the Halls belonging to either of the Societies, they would have erected in their Church that which in the greatest number of excellencies deserved the preference."

This was a blow to Smith, who before Harris appeared on the scene had been given to understand that he was to receive the commission. He tried his best to eliminate his rival, going so far as to persuade five of the tradesmen who were employed at the Temple to present a memorandum to the Benchers of the Middle Temple protesting that they had been present in the church "and did heare S<sup>r</sup> Francis Whitens K<sup>nt</sup> and then Treasurer of the Middel Tempell, London, and S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Robinson then also Treasuerer of the Inner Tempell, both of them being in the Tempell Church together in the month of Septemb<sup>r</sup> last, give

full order and directions vnto Mr. Bernard Smith, the King's Organ Maker, to make an organ for the Tempell Church . . ."

The memorandum did not have the effect desired by Father Smith, as a Committee composed of Masters of the Bench of both Societies was appointed in May 1683 to discuss the matter. The Committee decided to request each of the rivals to build an organ and "to have impartiall judges chosen to settle the controversy." In about fourteen months the two organs were ready. Smith managed to get leave to set up his organ in the Church instead of in the Hall, and Harris could not be refused the same privilege. When both organs were duly in their places recitals were given by Dr. Blow and Mr. Purcell on Smith's organ, while Harris employed M. Draghi, organist to Queen Catherine, "to touch" his instrument. Dr. Burney gives the name of Lully, the famous composer and *protégé* of Louis XIV, as playing for Harris. The Christian name of both Lully and Draghi was *Baptist*, which is, perhaps, the reason for his confusing the two musicians. So fine were both instruments that the Benchers could not make up their minds. Harris then challenged Smith to make additional reed-stops, including *Vox-Humana*, the *double-Courtel*—or *double Bassoon*—and others. These stops were new to English ears and so delighted the crowds who attended the trials that the dispute grew more acrimonious than ever. The Benchers of the Middle Temple declared for Smith's organ, saying that the instrument made by Harris was "discernably too low and weake for the said Church" and also that Smith had a prior claim. The Benchers of the Inner Temple disagreed. Finally, we are told by Burney, the decision was left to Lord Chief Justice Jefferies who terminated the controversy in favour of Father Smith. His statement is not corroborated by anything in the books of either Society, and in any case, Jefferies



was not Lord Chief Justice at the time of the decision. Probably, as Dr. Rimbault states in his *History of the Organ*, "the contest was decided by vote," and Jefferies being "of the house, it fell to his lot to give the casting vote." Be that as it may, there stands the organ, and though it has been enlarged and modernized it is substantially the same and remains a joy to all who hear it and the despair of the modern builder.

Father Smith did not care if his organ pleased the eye or not, provided it delighted the ear. When a friend criticized the rough appearance of his metal pipes and the noisy action of his organs, begging him to make them look as beautiful as they sounded, he replied, "*I do not care if ze pipe look like von teufel; I vill make it schpeak like von angel.*"

This beautiful instrument cost the Benchers "one thousand pounds of lawfull money of England." The Deed of Sale is still in the possession of the Middle Temple. The first organist to be appointed to play on it was one "Francis Pigott of London—gent." He was paid fifty pounds a year, out of which he had to find a "bellowes-blower, both when the said organs shall be played vpon and when they shall be repayred or put in tune, and vpon all other occasions at his owne charges."

Thalben-Ball who has, of course, played on innumerable organs, here and abroad, loves the Temple organ and thinks that for beauty and distinction of tone there is no other that can be compared with it. Seventeen of the original Father Smith stops are still in use, and he considers them some of the finest stops the organ possesses. It is a delightful experience to be with him in the organ-loft and hear him improvising and showing off their qualities. He does not care much for the enormous instruments which are being built nowadays. As he very rightly says, increased size does not give increased *musical* value. There is a

tendency among modern organ-builders and composers who write for the organ to try how nearly they can make it resemble an orchestra. This is both silly and futile. The various orchestral instrument stops are exquisite when used to give variety and effect to that essential and highly characteristic and fundamental background of diapason tone which is the great beauty of the organ, but no matter how you multiply its resources you can never make it sound like an orchestra, for the organ is a wind instrument and by no manner of means can you get from it the string effects : their clear-cut precision, their ethereal quality, or their rushing effect when used as in the "Leonora" overture. Nor can you obtain the sharp contrasts between strings and wind, the roll of the drums and the magic of the harp. Quick *forte* passages on very large organs are apt to sound blurred.

As we have seen, Thalben-Ball inherited an excellent choir from his predecessor ; he has made it the best church choir in England, which is to say, in the world, as in no other country can you find such lovely treble voices. Very few organists are good choir-trainers. Thalben-Ball once said to me : " If I am asked to recommend a good organist for a church I can do so without the slightest difficulty, but you can count the first-rate choir-trainers on your fingers." He has a deep and sympathetic understanding of that queer little animal, the choir-boy : half devil, half angel and wholly lovable. The Temple boys, from the youngest probationer to the corner boys, make it a point of honour to do their best, not, *ad majorem Dei Gloriam*, but to please Thalben-Ball ! Listen to their singing of the Psalms ; their perfect pointing, diction and expression—it gives one a new understanding of the significance of words. Hear their stately singing of a Bach Cantata or Brahms Requiem, without a conductor and with a rhythm and flexibility that I have found in no

other choir, and marvel at what can be accomplished by twelve small boys. And how exquisitely Thalben-Ball accompanies them ! I have, by the way, seen him accompany Bach's "Matthew Passion" from the full score and transpose it at the same time !

With regard to boys, he says the voice counts for about fifteen per cent. and the rest training. Two things over which he takes infinite pains are making them pronounce their consonants—a detail very few English choir-masters or singers consider worthy of their attention—and teaching them the meaning of the words they are singing. Boys can make ridiculous mistakes with intense seriousness. Thalben-Ball once heard one of his small boys during the intoning of the Creed assert with complete conviction : "I believe in Pontius Pilate." I myself remember making just such a queer mistake in those far-off Victorian days when I was very young. The now defunct ceremony of family prayers was duly observed at home, and my father—who was obsessed with the early morning cold bath fetish, which, in the winter, generally put him in a vile temper for the rest of the morning—read them fast and furiously. He always included the collect which begins, "Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou has made." I always thought he said, "Who hatest nothing *but the housemaid*," and could never understand why the Almighty made such a drastic exception in the case of the simple, kind-hearted girl.

Training boys is heartbreaking work ; voices are always cracking, "and all's to do again." But what a lovely noise a choir such as the Temple choir makes ! Melba considered a boy's voice the most beautiful of all voices and was immensely flattered if you told her she sang like one, as indeed she did when at her best. Her voice held much of the austere purity and morning freshness which makes a boy's voice so infinitely pathetic, for

there is a pathos in austerity as all lovers of Sienese primitives and Tudor music know.

Thalben-Ball is strongly convinced that the Church ought to inaugurate a movement to recognize the status and raise the salaries of church organists and to improve church music. In these days most of the Cathedral and College Chapel organists are Oxford or Cambridge men, and yet in some places the clergy—nearly always diehards—still regard musicians as being on a different social plane from themselves. And, generally speaking, salaries are so small that all the best men are being driven to the cinemas. The Church—which is now fighting Paganism with her back to the wall—can ill afford to starve and neglect one of her most powerful weapons. Music in England, as Thalben-Ball says, owes much to the Church: Tallis, Byrd, Purcell, Gibbons, Boyce and the two Wesleys were all organists. There is no possible shadow of doubt that good music helps the cause of religion enormously. I once said to the present Master of the Temple that I thought the exquisite and reverent way in which the choir render the Psalms was more likely to bring people to God than the sermon. His reply was, “*Than twenty sermons.*”

Thalben-Ball is very popular on the wireless and generally chooses his programmes admirably, though I have twice heard him try the patience of his listeners: once in Herbert Howells’ ugly and uninspired organ sonata, and the second time in a devastatingly dull and inordinately long work by Widor, called for some unknown reason “*Symphonie Romane.*” Why such an artist should be allowed to waste his time on such commonplace stuff passeth all understanding. Perhaps he was not responsible; the B.B.C. is still in its infancy, and as time goes on this centre for the emission of noises of every variety, pleasant and unpleasant, will doubtless cut its wisdom-teeth. Perhaps, too, it will learn

to appreciate *and* reward *great* English artists with the same warmth and liberality it shows to their foreign colleagues.

In the autumn of 1935 the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the recommendation of the Benchers of both Societies of the Temple, and the heads of the musical profession, conferred the degree of Doctor of Music of Oxford on Thalben-Ball. I believe he is one of the youngest musicians to have received this compliment. That is the only satisfactory way to obtain such a distinction. Like the Garter, "no damned merit about it!"

Up to the present time Thalben-Ball has written very little music. This is a pity, for what he *has* written is very good. A Christmas Carol, "There is no Rose," is one of the loveliest of all carols, and his "*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*," which is elaborately contrapuntal, is an inspired composition in the best Tudor tradition. His two predecessors were extremely prolific; indeed, of the 418 hymns in the Temple Hymn Book, 74 are by E. J. Hopkins, and Walford Davies was no less industrious. Thalben-Ball could, as he chose, turn out conventional church music by the ream, but to his eternal credit he does not do so. It is, by the way, remarkable that a church organist, however talented, is able to keep his musicianship and his faith intact. His soul is obliged to magnify the Lord in such loathly measures! I wish he would give us some new organ music. He is trying to get the best English composers, among others Bax and Walton, to write for the organ, and now that it is beginning to lose its exclusively church significance and to be regarded as the brilliant solo instrument which it is, it is difficult to see why composers do not turn their attention to it. Thalben-Ball has, however, devoted several years to a new Psalter in which the chants are not of the "four square" variety which have so long been the despair of the cultured musician, but which, like the Tudor madrigals,

follow the line of the poetry. It will, I am convinced, revolutionize the singing of the Psalms.

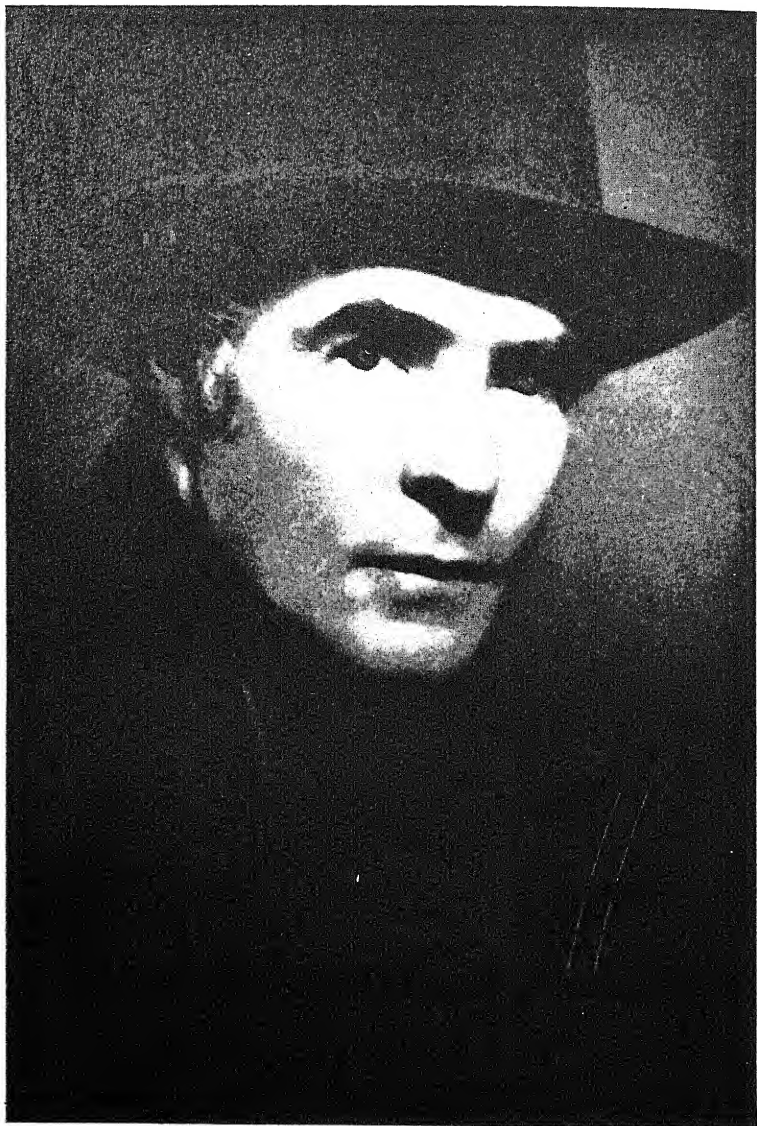
Thalben-Ball has a genius for friendship as great as is his musical genius, and his friends make endless claims upon it. Time does not exist for him ; he has the delightful faculty of being entirely engrossed with the occupation or companion of the moment and forgetting urgent appointments, or pupils from remote suburban dwelling-places, patiently waiting for him to turn up. But when he does so, "Thalben has such charming graces" that they forgive him immediately. If you write to him, do not expect an answer, at any rate within Space-Time. In his study there is a suitcase ; in the suitcase are scores of letters, and sometimes, in a fit of conscious rectitude, he takes out a handful and answers them. Happy and blest are you if yours is among them !

All the same, he has most of the Christian virtues that so few Christians possess : tolerance, kindness, unselfishness and not a trace of "side"—which is very unmusical !



# MR. REGINALD EVES





MR. REGINALD EVES  
(from a Self-Portrait)

## MR. REGINALD EVES

*Introduced by Francis Howard*

HOWEVER intelligent and sensitive their respective perceptions of, and reactions to, painting, those of the literary man and the painter are inevitably different. The fundamental reason for this is that the actual handwriting of the painter is not only indivisible from the æsthetic and intellectual structure of the picture, but an essentially and, possibly, preponderating part of it. The writer, on the contrary, is quite independent of such autography, and as his medium is one of the rudiments of general schooling, it affords everybody equal access to full comprehension of what he wishes to express.

Painting, however, has no such general unautographic medium of presentation, and I would say its full comprehension is consequently limited to those who have learned to read it as exponents, or practising students. While this marks those who merely write about painting as unprecise and imperfectly informed, it leaves them by so much freer to their reactions; and much delightful—if discursive and frequently irrelevant—writing has been the result. I do not think I ever knew anyone with less *flair* for, or real judgment of pictures than the late George Moore, but his interest in them has given us some of his most charming writing.

y great  
anville

### ERRATUM

In the list of Plates and underneath the photograph of Mr. R. G. Eves, opposite page 195, the words

‘From a self portrait’ should be deleted.

Eves. If there is anything to qualify in his appreciation it is the suggestion that Eves is not so detailed as two other painters. I find him, however, even more detailed than they in many ways, particularly his rendering of light and tone with all their subtleties.

Some of the "reflections" leading to the main subject are temptingly controversial: I should like to refute at length the quotation that "full maturity is always akin to decay" in art; and that "Cézanne spent all his life trying to eliminate the unessential and to paint Nature the Mathematician."

I see no "decay" in any true form of art, or any reason for such: men and social and political systems decay and interrupt, and bring to a pause great artistic periods and activities, but I can think of none with any evidence of having been "worked out."

Who can say the greatest Titian has not yet to be painted, or the greatest Gothic or Georgian building not yet to be built? Our deplorable habit of talking about the five minutes (in relation to the age of the world) in which men have concerned themselves with art, as if each step were unrelated to or no longer accessible in the short flight, puts the past out of focus, and fogs our perception of the future.

Cézanne is a subject—like those submitted to psychoanalysts—which elicits a different and contradictory diagnosis from each practitioner. But, however conflicting painters' estimates of him are, I do not find any maintaining that he limited himself successfully to essentials: it takes a supreme technical master to do that, and to determine what essentials are.

But to get back to Eves, I have said of him and I say it again, that he is one of the most distinguished and competent portrait painters of our time.

The small proportion of complete achievement in this branch of art proves it one of the most difficult of graphic undertakings, demanding the highest order of representational accuracy in addition to all the æsthetic and intellectual elements essential to all good painting. The first without the rest may be as dull as an auctioneer's inventory, however conscientious, and the rest alone is as futile as any form of inaccurate or misleading statement, however charming and ingratiating.

In Eves we have that *rara avis*, a painter whose portraits are a balanced fusion of all these components enlivened by an unflagging interest in people, character and life, and controlled by a skill and integrity which has never compromised with prettiness. Over or understatement does not appeal to him.

The only thing he is not interested in painting is the lily.

His accomplishment is best explained to the layman as analagous to good descriptive writing or speaking, the right word at the right time in the right place, witty, grave, or gay, qualified by such emphasis, accent, reticence or tone as the subject imposes.

The Gertrude Steins and other experimentalists of contemporary painting have no effect on his adherence to this formula and vocabulary of the great sixteenth and seventeenth century masters whose works he has made many copies of, and whom he loves. In an age of unexampled vulgarity and charlatanism, he keeps their colours flying, and aspiring students of to-day will do well to follow his example as competently as they can.

## MR. REGINALD EVES

"Picture<sup>1</sup> is the invention of heaven, the most ancient and most akin to Nature."

BEN JONSON.

AND in Jonson's day "picture" had to be akin to Nature. That practical dreamer, the Elizabethan, would have had little patience with the intellectual Bolshevism which causes a certain—though happily diminishing—number of modern artists to find the language of such painters as Piero della Francesca, Titian, Tintoretto, Velasquez, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Manet, too poor a medium in which to express their genius.

Nothing that is, however—at any rate nothing outside the realm of pure mathematics—can be entirely sufficient unto itself, so each successive generation looks wistfully back to some period of the past with which it finds itself in sympathy; which seems to it to stand for youth; full of eager curiosity and confidence in its ability to mould life according to the heart's desire. Until the end of the last century that period for most of us was the Renaissance which, whatever its political history, was certainly the golden age of art and literature. Especially is this true of the exquisitely tender Florentine art produced at the moment when the Middle Ages seemed to melt into the early dawn of the Renaissance.

The iconoclasts of the twentieth century consider that there is nothing more to be said in the manner of the Renaissance,

<sup>1</sup> Painting.

which was, they say, with some reason, a culmination, not a renewal. Art, they think, is decrepit with age, and if it wants to renew its youth it must go back to what they call "the essentials." And so we have had the art of the sphere and the cube, born in France, and abandoned almost before we ourselves had discovered it : Impressionism, so impressionistic that the most careful scrutiny fails to reveal of what it is intended to be an impression, and pictures which are avowedly mere experiments in colour and design. Most difficult to understand is the reversion to primitive art, the art of the Congo, of Java or Peru : strange grinning black idols and figures like the Dutch dolls beloved of our sisters in the days of Queen Victoria. "Reversion to the primitive type," biologists tell us, "is always the prelude to extinction."

These remarks do not, of course, apply to the Italian and Flemish pictures known as "primitives." The Italian painters of the fourteenth century had a civilization of more than a thousand years behind them. They were re-discovering the art of drawing, lost in the Dark Ages, and their eager striving to overcome technical difficulties and give expression to their visions and beliefs makes their work intensely alive ; far more so, indeed, than is the coldly perfect art of many of the late Renaissance painters. Full maturity is always akin to decay ; this is true of all art. There are Gothic statues at the Cathedral of Chartres, and even gargoyles at Notre Dame de Paris, that have infinitely more vitality than has much of the frequently overrated Greek sculpture and nearly all the work of the *sei-cento* Florentine sculptors.

Such so-called "primitive" art, however, has little in common with the rudimentary attempts of the untutored savage to express himself. It repays the closest study, and—apart from its

intellectual interest—much of it possesses extraordinary decorative value. There is nothing in painting more exquisite than the best work of such painters as Duccio di Buoninsegna, Lippo Memmi (his son-in-law), Simone Martini, and, later, Sassetta and Neroccio, with their lovely singing lines and joyous colour. Cézanne, who spent his life trying to eliminate the unessential and to paint Nature the Mathematician, owed much to the early Sienese painters ; his landscapes, curiously enough, frequently suggest the bare backgrounds in some of the pictures of Duccio and Ugolino da Siena.

Perhaps you will say : “ What on earth have these not too original reflections to do with Reginald Eves ? ” Well : he is their *raison d’être*, for they occurred to me after an argument we had lately, and I have the deplorable habit of wandering round my subject. I like arguing with Eves ; he is one of the few people whose arguments do not confirm me in my own opinion. We had been talking about modern art, and I said : “ It seems to me that everything that can be said in music, painting or language has already been said. What possible really new combination of notes is there to be found ? The human voice, the piano, and the orchestral instruments, singly or combined, have been exploited to their utmost capability. What secret in portrait painting have the great Italian, Dutch and English portrait-painters left to be discovered ? What can the landscape-painter hope to do that has not been done to perfection by Hobbema, Constable, Courbet, Sisley and Cézanne ? What realm of thought have the Greeks not explored ? What can the poet sing that has not been sung by the long line of sweet singers from Chaucer and Shakespeare to the end of the nineteenth century ? ‘ The thing that has been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done is

that which shall be done ; and there is no new thing under the sun.' ”

“ When you are in a pessimistic mood,” said Eves, “ you always become scriptural. And your quotation, too, can be used against you, for at the time Solomon, or whoever it was, wrote *Ecclesiastes*, all the art of the Western world was yet to come. Not only that : the exquisite seventeenth-century English of *Ecclesiastes* is as superior to the original Hebrew as is Keats to Ella Wheeler Wilcox.”

“ Well,” I answered, “ what *do* you think there remains to be said that has not been said already a thousand times ? ”

“ I cannot say exactly *what*, but when a genius arises, be he writer, composer or painter, he will have something of his own to say. Some individual and delightful way of using the old words, the old notes, the old palette. It is not so very long since Debussy gave a definitely new range of colours to the harmonic repertoire ; and who—until after the event—could have deduced Céanne from the Sienese primitives ? ”

“ Every original genius in painting,” he went on to say, “ to some extent recreates Nature for us, and so gives us something new to think about. We only became aware of the Dégas, Manet and Renoir types when we had seen them on canvas, but they were there nevertheless, and the wonderful street scenes of those painters made people realize for the first time what the streets which they had known all their lives really looked like. Dégas, Manet, Renoir. . . . What a trio ! ”

Eves has not identified himself with any of the various “ schools ” of painting, but he *can* paint. Lavery, always generous, said of him, “ Eves paints better than any of us.” He does not like groups. “ They have their merits,” he says, “ but to be one of a group indicates individual weakness. When you want a



companion in a difficult or dangerous situation it means that you are afraid to be alone."

"Quite so," said I, "but a 'group' can contain men of vastly different types. Monet, Manet, Renoir, Cézanne and Seurat were all 'classified' as being members of one 'group' or another, yet how different was the individual outlook of each of them." Eves agreed, "But," he said, "all slogans are dangerous, and in art they give rise to conventions infinitely more narrow than any of the Academic conventions. And to exchange one convention for another simply means a change of professor. The various *isms* often serve as a refuge for painters who *au fond* have no confidence in their own powers."

New or *soi-disant* new theories in art have a far better chance of support now than they had in pre-war days, the reason being that people remember how their grandparents reacted to Wagner, Ibsen and Manet, and what their parents said of Renoir, Debussy and Cézanne. "Perhaps in twenty or thirty years this will be considered a masterpiece," they say, when listening to some atonal composition, or gazing amazedly at some sur-realist abortion in which a lump of cats' meat seems to be coming out of what might be either a trombone or part of the plumbing system of a public convenience. However, it is a good thing to have an open mind. So many of those of us who have reached what used to be called "a certain age" are too apt to sigh sadly, "Who will show us any good?" Progress, we feel, reached its culminating point in producing *us*.

Eves himself is above all a portrait-painter, and a very subtle and distinguished one. There are many ways of painting a portrait, though Dickens—satirizing in *Nicholas Nickleby* the miniature-painters of his day, reduced them to two. "In fact," said Miss La Creevy, sinking her voice to a confidential whisper,

“there are only two styles of portrait-painting, the serious and the smirk : and we sometimes use the serious for professional people (except actors sometimes) and the smirk for private ladies and gentlemen who don’t care so much about looking clever.”

Eves adopts neither of these methods ! Although he claims to belong to no school, his portraits are, I think, impressionistic ; that is to say they are truthful impressions of his sitter, unspoilt by the fussy minute detail so beloved of Laszlo, and many others of the older painters who belong rightly to the ’90s. The personality of an artist is manifested in the quality and spirit of his work rather than in the photographic reproduction of lace, jewellery, fabrics and other minutiae. Eves likes to see a lot of his sitter before he begins the portrait : to lunch with him, talk with him, and to find out what he is like *inside*. After that he works very quickly. This was the method of Sargent in his early days, when he painted the souls of the Wertheimers, and that cruel portrait of the violinist Johannes Wolff. But Eves is a far finer draughtsman than was Sargent. There is a lot to be said for this method ; after a long series of sittings, the artist gets to know the features of his sitter too well : he becomes commonplace.

I like Eves’s colour ; it is cool but never cold. I wonder, though, if the colours of the present day will stand the test of time like those used by the pre-Renaissance painters, who mixed their own ? The early missals, and many of the Sienese primitives look as if they had been painted yesterday, while, for instance, in John’s magnificent portrait of Madame Suggia—which technically and imaginatively bears comparison with almost any of the great Renaissance portraits—the colour is already fading.

It is doubtful, Eves thinks, that art can ever again play a

part in the life of any nation comparable with that which it played in ancient Greece and in medieval Italy. How can it ? An artistic community must of necessity be small and, however gifted, it can impose its standard of beauty only in small cities such as Athens and Florence. Then, too, religion and art always seem to flourish together. It is understandable. Faith in a religion, whether it be Christianity or Paganism, undoubtedly stimulates both the imaginative and the spiritual qualities in a man—if he has any to stimulate. I am quite sure that if you believe that Dionysus lurks among the green and purple shadows of the vines, your picture of the *Vendange* will be far more imaginative than if you regard it merely as a promise of excellent wine to come. Peter and Pan have been an equal source of inspiration to poets and painters.

In *quattrocento* Florence the people were surrounded on every side by beautiful things. Churches were elaborately frescoed, the street corners were adorned with sculpture and terracottas by such artists as Donatello and the della Robbias, and painters for the most part worked in open shops (*botteghe*) in full view of their fellow-citizens, who criticized them freely. And their rulers—generally intelligent, educated, cultured men such as the Medici family, or the Sforzas in Milan—gave them every encouragement. They were fortunate, too, in having in the legends and theology of the Church a vast store of fascinating material on which to exercise their art. Nowadays painters are practically limited to portrait and landscape painting.

Eves loves portrait-painting. He does not agree with Sir Joshua Reynolds who—in spite of his fame as a portrait-painter—considered it “an inferior art.” He has sat at the feet of the great Venetians, Titian, Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese, who expressed the youthful spirit of the Renaissance so much more

completely than did the scientifically minded Florentines. He has also an unbounded admiration for Rubens—whom I, alas ! have never been able to appreciate properly—for his clarity and his marvellous draughtsmanship. Like all painters who have taken the trouble to learn the technique of their art—a toilsome business which, he says, the present generation of artists seems to consider unnecessary—he has spent a good deal of time copying the old masters. I have not seen any of his copies of portraits, but hanging in his studio is the very finest copy of a Canaletto I have ever come across. It is a copy of one of the large pictures of the Grand Canal at Venice. Drawing, colour, *patina*, and above all that indefinable quality, the *spirit* of the painter, are all so faithfully reproduced that it would take a very clever expert to tell it from the original.

One of Eves' best portraits is, I think, that of Earl Jellicoe—Jellicoe considered it to be far the best portrait of him in existence. The portrait of the Bishop of Carlisle, too, is delightful ; the kind, wise, old face suggests the wistful melancholy of age. One recalls Masfield's sonnet on growing old :

“ Only stay quiet, while my mind remembers  
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.”

He has also painted admirable portraits of the Judges, Lord Cave and Lord Trevethin, which you can see at the Middle Temple. Of his women I like best the vivid and brilliant portrait of Elsa Lanchester. The Tate Gallery acquired his “ Thomas Hardy,” and others of his pictures are to be seen at the National Portrait Gallery.

Eves likes working to order : he says truly that all the best work of the world has been done for money. It is like playing Bridge. Platitudes about “ playing for the sake of the game,”

and so on notwithstanding, we all play better when playing for stakes, and the higher the stakes, the better we play. The knowledge that there is a handsome cheque coming gives the artist or writer a feeling of security ; he works more happily and—if he is an idealist—money means time in which to dream, travel, and carry out unremunerative experiments.

There is nothing of the Bohemian about Eves, though he carries his dislike of business to the extent of never making any arrangements with his sitters, or even knowing how much money he has in the bank ! His brother and his charming wife see to all these tiresome details for him. “ I am only really happy when painting,” he says. Very few successful artists or musicians are Bohemians, though some, as for instance, Augustus John, were born citizens of the *Quartier Latin*. Murger, in his delightful impossible book, painted Bohemianism in utterly false colours. In reality it is for most “ Bohemians ” a life of mean squalor, petty borrowings, poor food and wretched lodgings, only possible for the very young who can hope all things and the old for whom there is nothing left to hope. Although *rangé*, as a good *bourgeois* should be, Eves is not in the least *social* in his tastes. Perhaps he would make more money if he could bring himself to paint pretty chocolate-box portraits of society women like . . . well ! I won’t say whom. But then he is not at all avaricious, and living in style and working feverishly in order to make enough money to keep it up would not amuse him in the least. He is an excellent violinist and finds more beauty in Bach than in Belgravia, and he loves the country and the sea.

Portrait-painting, Eves thinks, is the only form of art which offers any prospects to the young painter, and even at that, he must see to it that his work pleases the eye of his artless sitter. He himself paints charming water-colours, but the lovers—

and patrons !—of this delightful art are rare indeed. Lavery, too, could have been a great landscape painter—I have seen one or two exquisite early things of his—but he could not live by landscapes. The public which takes a real and intelligent pleasure in looking at pictures is even smaller than that which goes to concerts—always the same public, by the way—and it is at one with the latter in its detestation of anything new. If you wish to fill your hall you must give it what it knows, and it knows so little. Bruno Walter, Toscanini and their like must be sick unto death of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and how they must squirm when they attack that orgy of vulgarity, the finale to the Choral Symphony. And try to attract an audience to a piano-forte recital with a programme bereft of Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Chopin and Liszt !

The tyranny of the dead is remorseless. I was brought up to worship the accepted deities, and solemnly told that the *Mona Lisa* was the greatest picture in the world. I did not like it and considered it absurdly over-rated, but never dared to say so. Now, however, when people pity my ignorance I can point to no less an authority than Bernard Berenson in support of my opinion. The *Mona Lisa* owes her proud position to Walter Pater, who, when he wrote his famous description of her, let his imagination run away with him and forgot what she really looked like. Perhaps, however, Pater was right and my taste is at fault. But after all what is taste if not the ability to use our own judgment when looking at a work of art ? To react to it immediately and appraise its qualities without being obliged to have recourse to opinions of others.

Eves is passionately fond of butterflies and—boats ! He has a large collection of the former, and spends hours trying to capture in paint the lovely iridescent colour of their wings. He

even married one ! His wife was a Papillon, one of that old Sussex family who have been for so many centuries identified with Crowhurst.

His love of everything connected with the sea is, perhaps, atavistic, for he is a direct descendant of the great Elizabethan sailor Sir Richard Grenville whose portrait, by the way, both he and his son curiously resemble. The Grenvilles in the eighteenth century owned a considerable part of Brighton and the country round, Brighthelmstone as it was then called. Eves' great-great-grandfather, who held this property at the end of the century, was one of the dissolute set who revolved round the Regent and he gambled away—or sold to pay his gambling debts—all his Brighton estate with the exception of two or three houses. This was illegal as the property was entailed, and he had concealed the fact that he had a son, without whose consent the entail could not be broken. When Eves' father married he was told by a solicitor that the deeds were invalid and that there was every chance of the Grenville family getting the property back if they took the matter up. They did not, however, feel inclined to risk a long and expensive law-suit. One of the Grenvilles was killed fighting smugglers in Castle Square, Brighton. There is a memorial of the event to be seen there.

Eves himself owns a small property in Sussex, Marsham Farm, at Fairlight. It was rented by his grandfather, and when Eves was a small boy he often spent his holidays there and—after the manner of small boys—made up his mind that when he was grown up and had made a fortune he would buy it. The dream came true. In 1917 the estate, of which it was part, was for sale and he bought it and now farms it for pleasure. In the old days there was a cottage hard by which was exactly like the dwelling of Ham and Peggotty in *David Copperfield*. It was inhabited by an old couple named

Collins, who looked as if they had stepped straight out of Dickens. Little Reginald Eves loved them and used to pass most of his time exploring the cottage, which was full of the treasure trove of the sea which sailors are apt to accumulate, or playing at smugglers with the fisher-lads.

The cottage has gone with the winds of that wild coast : gone with the days when he and the fisher-lads he played with thought :

“ There was no more behind  
But such a day to-morrow as to-day  
And to be boy eternal.”

I think Eves would give all he has if, like a crab, he could go backwards and live again those days.





MISS ALICE HEAD



MISS ALICE HEAD

## MISS ALICE HEAD

*Introduced by Emilie H. Peacocke*

IT is my pleasant duty in this parade of present-day personalities to introduce Miss Alice Head who is without doubt one of the most successful women journalists in the world. The author has lettered the milestones on the highway of Miss Head's remarkable professional career. The obvious thing to say of a woman who has reached such a pinnacle is that she must be too well known to require introduction.

Strange to say this would be far from the truth. Miss Head must know most of the men and women of her generation who have become eminent or "best-sellers" in the world of art and letters. She has directed the periodical reading of vast numbers, she has established new records in the power of advertising, but none the less she is known by sight and even by name to comparatively few.

I cannot claim to belong to the circle of Alice Head's most intimate personal friends nor have I ever had business relations with her. I can write with the more freedom therefore of one who has always had my respect and admiration and is numbered among the acquaintances whom it is a pleasure to meet.

There is something refreshingly girlish-looking about this woman of Great Business. The simple small pleasures appeal to her. She is never jaded or bored, but surveys the passing pageant with smiling, sympathetic eyes. Watch her at the theatre

—she is a regular playgoer—the jokes and witticisms will call forth merry laughter ; in the interval her comments will be sound and to the point, and if the play should be one of those of which it is not easy to speak well, at least she will not speak ill.

See her at a luncheon gathering or a banquet—and she knows the advantage of many contacts and the necessity of finding out for herself what people in many spheres of thought and action are thinking and doing. She can be, by turns, the vivacious, animated talker, or, what is more difficult to so many women to-day, the good listener.

Well-dressed she is in the sense that her clothes are good and she manages to convey the impression that she likes them, but no one would call her smart. The dark hair frames her face softly, the dresses have an easy grace and hats do not attempt to suggest fashion's last hard word.

Miss Head is never effusive, but that does not mean that she is unappreciative. I recall, one night, a casual after-dinner talk in the basement lounge of a women's club frequented by writers and journalists, when the conversation drifted to the subject of the new young people who might be coming along. Miss Head remarked that she always watched the feature page I was editing at that time in a daily newspaper of great circulation with special interest. It was there that she found new names, fresh writers. No compliment could have been more gratifying to me, for it had been my great desire to encourage newcomers and to try out clever young writers. To this end I had been giving for some time very special attention to all contributions from the unknown.

The inevitable question comes : What is her secret of a success so far beyond that which comes to many women of affairs who may be accounted brilliant and gifted : Envious people

may say Luck. Well, luck may be a factor in attaining a big position but something more than luck is demanded if that position is to be retained, and Miss Head's career has been one of steady progress from height to yet greater height.

She possesses rare qualities of administration and these count for much. She is firm without being too assertive, efficient but not fussy. With her, it is not the iron hand under the velvet glove, but rather the sure grip on the steering-wheel and the clear vision of the road ahead. Her quiet self-confidence is convincing without being irritating. She knows her own mind, is willing to depute authority and to encourage the sense of responsibility in those around her. These are invaluable qualities in one to whom high executive position has come.

Finally, it seems to me that Alice Head is a woman of great loyalty in both the private and business relationships of life, and being loyal herself she inspires loyalty in others. I know how her close friends regard her. It happens, sometimes in the late hours of the night when I leave my own Fleet Street office, southward bound, I meet a journalist colleague, a friend of Alice Head, who is also on her way home at the end of the working day. She is an amusing woman whose comments on life are witty and can be caustic. Speak of Miss Head and she will say with the deep sincerity that carries its own conviction, "We should all be proud of Alice Head."

And in the quietude of Temple chambers I have talked of Alice Head to one of her notable contributors, again a woman who can be critical of editorial ways. "It is a pleasure to work for Miss Head," she has said to me simply, not once but many times.

## MISS ALICE HEAD

"Great is journalism. Is not every able editor a ruler of the world, being a persuader of it; though self-elected yet sanctioned by the sale of his numbers?"—CARLYLE, *French Revolution*.

VERY few people, I imagine, read Carlyle nowadays, but how often he managed to hit the nail on the head! Those of us, editors or writers, who cannot point with pride to the sale of their numbers, are apt to turn up superior noses at the popular press and at authors whose books sell in hundreds of thousands. It is a foolish attitude to take, but human nature being what it is, a very natural one. Magazines and books which appeal only to the cultured few are not necessarily more valuable to the community than the best of those which are read by the multitude, indeed, they may well be of less value, for the cultured few are the righteous who have no need to be called to repentance. And again, second-rate literature is not the only literature which achieves great success. Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray, Tennyson, and in our own day Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, can hardly be called second-rate, though the sale of their numbers is calculated to make many a highbrow writer turn green with envy.

Be that as it may, from a worldly point of view there is no gift so valuable to the author or editor as that of being able to gauge accurately the taste of that elusive individual, the man in the street, or rather, that of his wife and daughters, for it is woman, not man, who makes the world go round for Fleet

Street, and those dependent on its changing fashions. The magazine or the novelist whose name is great in Islington is fortunate indeed, and, apart from the financial reward such success brings, it is surely no small thing to lighten the hours of leisure of those countless thousands of men and women who work hard for fifty weeks in the year to keep those little homes going ; the little homes with their high-sounding names—" Chatsworth," " Balmoral," " Sandringham," and so forth—which in their neat uniformity line the streets of the vast interminable suburbs of London and every big city. Verily, the Marie Corellis, Ethel M. Dells, Charles Garvices and Beverley Nichols of this world deserve well of their fellow-men.

We do not know who wrote the first book. Even in biblical times we are told that " of the making of many books there is no end." The earliest magazine or newspaper of which we have any record appears to have been the *Acta Diurna* which was issued in A.D. 61 under the direct supervision of Julius Cæsar. It chronicled the events that occurred from day to day, and if it recorded them truthfully it must have rivalled the most lurid of our modern Sunday papers.

It is only in recent times that the popular magazine has come into being, brought about by the spread of education and the ever-increasing importance of women in the scheme of things. The eighteenth-century magazines, such as the *Spectator*, were written for the educated male, and, in spite of the many brilliant writers who contributed to them, were pompous and heavy according to our ideas. In the mid-nineteenth century *All the Year Round* catered for the same kind of readers which support the better-class present-day magazines, and from then on new magazines were constantly appearing. Among the first produced exclusively for women was that excellent weekly, the *Young*



## GEORGIAN PORTRAITS

*Lady's Journal*, and later on came *Home Notes* and *Home Chat*, which have been going for at least forty years. At the time they first appeared they really did "supply a long-felt want." The daily papers had not yet thought of trying to make their columns attractive to women, and neither they nor their advertisers dreamt of the immense possibilities that lay in the systematic exploitation of female vanity. No paper published a Woman's Page. I believe it was Alfred Harmsworth, afterwards Lord Northcliffe, who was the first to tap this vast source of revenue.

To-day women's magazines are legion ; they are for the most part edited by women of first-class education, intelligence and knowledge of their sex, and among these editors the subject of our sketch stands out pre-eminently. Alice Head knew her own mind from a very early age. When only fourteen she made two resolutions—one, that she would be a journalist, and the other that she would be successful. Though still young she has succeeded in fulfilling both of them so thoroughly that she is now in a position to fling away ambition. What is the secret of her success : Let us endeavour to point the moral and adorn the tale.

Alice Head was given an excellent general education at the famous "Frances Mary Buss School." Miss Buss and her partner, Miss Beale, were pioneers in the higher education of women. They were both portentously serious and neither of them held any doubts as to which was the Dominant Sex. It was one of their love-lorn pupils who wrote the celebrated lines :

Miss Buss and Miss Beale  
Cupid's darts never feel.  
How different from us  
Miss Beale and Miss Buss !

At school Alice Head followed the example of those two admirable ladies, and, regardless of Cupid's darts, profited to the full by their conscientious teaching.

There was only one way to get on, she decided, and that was to know your work from A to Z, so, after she had learnt shorthand and typewriting thoroughly, she looked about for a job in the world of Fleet Street and—through an advertisement—found one in the office of *Country Life*, whose editor was P. Anderson Graham. The office was then in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, and in the same building that long defunct review, the *Academy*, had its one-room dwelling. In her spare time she often helped its acting editor, Lord Alfred Douglas, who, if not exactly a darling of the gods, was at any rate the terror of the judges. When later on the *Academy* was bought by Lady Glenconner, Lord Alfred became its proprietor and editor. About this time Alice Head left *Country Life* and went over to the *Academy*.

She found herself in a curiously different atmosphere from that of the respectable *Country Life* office. She had, one may say, exchanged country life for *la vie de Bohème* ! Lord Alfred ran the review entirely on his own lines, which included a complete indifference to his advertisers and a firm belief that any opinions other than his own were not worth holding, indeed, he was honestly convinced that those who differed from him were either fools or knaves—probably both. He succeeded in inducing many brilliant writers to contribute to the review, quarrelling sooner or later with most of them, but he also gave their first chance to several men who afterwards became well known. Himself one of the best of that brilliant group of poets of the 'nineties, of whom one at least—A. E. Housman—has joined the immortals, Lord Alfred had a keen eye for poetic talent in others

and never refused a good poem. The *Academy* led rather a hand-to-mouth existence. Its staff consisted of Lord Alfred, Alice Head and an office boy, but later on it was augmented by the unspeakable Crosland, who, if the late Frank Harris may justly be called *King* of the bounders, at least belonged to the royal family of that ilk. Clever journalist though he was, he was a serious liability to any editor whose resources were limited. He has left some reputation in the world of Bohemia as a good talker, a hard drinker and a talented minor poet. The poetic gift was not inherited from his family. He was fond of describing the efforts of one of his relations—a religious crank—to write a hymn. The result after an entire Sunday spent in his room seeking for inspiration was :

“Heaven’s pearly gates are open wide all sinners to receive,  
Likewise the North American Indian if he will but believe !”

Alice Head did not stay long with the *Academy* after the advent of Crosland. She could not stand him—who could ?—so she accepted a post with Lord Riddell, then one of the heads of “George Newnes,” and edited *Woman at Home*. She continued to do so until nearly the end of the war and gratefully admits how much she learnt from Lord Riddell. His point of view was always right. He taught her, among other things, to study and make notes about everything that interests women, to present her knowledge in an attractive manner, and, above all, to be able to detect instantly superficial or inaccurate information and to know when it is necessary to employ experts. I remember once seeing an amusing sketch of the editor of a woman’s magazine, answering correspondents. He was sitting at his desk with his coat off, a pipe in his mouth and a tankard of beer beside him. Underneath were the words, “Yes, Gladys dear.

I know how anxious you must be about your sweet little girl, I myself being a mother ! ”

Alice Head has no use for that sort of journalism. The cookery articles, for instance, for the magazines she controls, are written by experts on cooking, and the same thing applies to the all-important subject of dress, household management, health, indeed, to every subject of which the magazine treats. As she says, “ You must be able to visualize the kind of household in which you are regarded as a court of appeal.” The subject matter of the older of the magazines for women is much the same as that of to-day ; it is in the extreme competence with which it is treated, and in the “ get-up ” of the magazines that the difference lies—above all in the illustrations. In looking at some old numbers of the *Young Lady's Journal* the other day it struck me that some of the much-tried heroines of the novelettes not only asked for trouble ; they dressed for the part !

Towards the end of the war *Nash's Magazine* wanted an assistant-editor. Alice Head applied for the job and got it. *Nash's* was published by the “ National Magazine Company,” founded by William Randolph Hearst in 1910. At first it was not too successful, as the various editors and art experts sent over by Hearst did not understand the English mentality. Hearst was quick to see the reason for its comparative failure. He engaged a brilliant Irishman, J. Y. M'Peake, to edit it, and its circulation soon soared to dizzy heights. M'Peake commissioned contributions from many of the most popular English and American writers and artists ; a valuable experience for Alice Head, for she came into contact with them all.

Among the Hearst publications was an extremely popular magazine called *Good Housekeeping*, and, encouraged by the success of *Nash's*, Hearst decided to bring out an English edition

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of it, run on entirely British lines. For two years M'Peake worked preparing the ground for it, and when the first number appeared in 1922 it was an instantaneous success. Thousands of well-meaning but incompetent housewives took it to their hearts and cried Reform ! Reform ! Its circulation is now enormous, and under Alice Head, who now edits it, is constantly increasing. In 1924 M'Peake, who had become Managing Director, died, and Alice Head took his place.

In 1927 Hearst, who had long wanted to own an art magazine, bought *The Connoisseur*, and two years later added *Harper's Bazaar*, already an American success, to his bag.

The magazines are curiously different. *Good Housekeeping* appeals chiefly to the vast number of women who either do their own work or keep one, or at most two, servants. It is infinitely useful to them, and if its admirable articles on food and the varied and economical *menus* it gives, eventually help to improve English middle-class cooking it is more than a magazine—it is a *Book of Life*, and its dwelling-place, like Solomon's Temple, should be fashioned of rare marbles and precious woods.

*Good Housekeeping* receives hundreds of letters asking for advice, not only on dress and household matters, but on every conceivable subject : finance, health, and how to tread the thorny path of etiquette. Very often she is able to give valuable help ; for instance, a mother whose little boy had a promising voice wrote asking how she could get him into a good choir. Alice Head put her in touch with a friend who got the little chap into one of the most famous choirs in England.

*Harper's Bazaar* has quite another type of reader—the woman to whom half a crown is of no account, who buys perfume at two guineas a phial and is interested in jade and ivory bathrooms, Paris clothes and the latest smart restaurants. The public for

this class of magazine is a very small one, probably not more than 20,000, and it is kept going chiefly by the advertisements of shopkeepers who minister to *la vie de luxe*. *The Connoisseur*, under Granville Fell, its brilliant and experienced editor, has become one of the first art magazines in Europe. Its great success is just another example of Alice Head's genius in securing the right man and giving him a free hand.

Alice Head's association with William Randolph Hearst has developed from a business one into a close friendship. Perhaps there are few prominent Americans who have been more misunderstood in England than Hearst. During the war he was regarded almost as Public Enemy No. 1, chiefly because he bitterly opposed European War Loans and the searching of American ships. But the material side of the matter, the conviction—which was justified by events—that the impoverished, war-stricken nations would not be able to repay the loans, was to him only a minor question. Like Bishop Barnes he has a passionate hatred of war, its savage cruelty, stupidity and wastefulness; fatal alike to victor and vanquished. He wrote: "We have gone into our churches and prayed to God to restore peace and revive good will. God has made it come to pass that this war cannot continue unless we who prayed for peace shall supply the arms and money to protract the war." He used all his resources to keep the United States out of it all, quoting Lord Charles Beresford, who said that it would bankrupt England, and also the Lord Chancellor, who prophesied the exhaustion and destruction of Europe. Europe is now beginning to ask itself, "What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?"

Far from being an enemy to England, Hearst has a great love and admiration for this country. Like all men who spring from good old families, he feels the pull of tradition. We cannot

escape from tradition—consciously or unconsciously it is part of the very fibre of our being, it moulds our every thought, our every action. In every old civilization we breathe it in as we tread the streets of the ancient towns and villages ; it is pictured in the churches and manor houses, rung by the bells. We feel that we are links in a long, long train of tradition. How many generations have trod those streets, worshipped in those churches, and how many will continue to do so, “when old age shall this generation waste” ! That is why old countries and old customs are so strangely comforting when one is oneself growing old. A bustling new place cannot give that sense of peace, of resignation to the common lot. With Hearst the pull of tradition proved so strong that it caused him to buy his medieval Welsh fortress, St. Donat’s Castle. He had longed for it from the day when a New York antique dealer showed him a photograph of a room in the castle in which was some fine old furniture that the owner wished to sell. In 1925 Alice Head paid him a visit in America and he told her that he longed to possess a castle in England, above all, St. Donat’s. That same year it was advertised for sale in *Country Life*. He cabled her to buy it at any price. She began to negotiate for it at midday the day she received the cable and by half-past two the purchase was completed ! Hearst, who loves the Gothic, has filled it with beautiful old furniture, armour, and some of the finest medieval tapestry in existence. Most of these treasures have been secured for him by Alice Head.

Hearst is a loyal and generous friend, indeed, his generosity is so great that his family have difficulty in keeping it within due bounds. He is incapable of hoarding. He pays his employees at the highest rates, trusts them fully, and gives them an amazingly good time. Many are the people, says Alice Head, whom he

has taken from positions of obscurity and put in posts of power and affluence. Some of them have later on become centres of influence themselves. It is a deep grief to Hearst that owing to the intolerable tax situation in America he has had to cease publishing *The New York American*, thereby throwing nearly 200 people out of work. Hearst and Ford are the two largest employers of labour in their country and it is difficult to see what good purpose can be served by putting all these difficulties in their way.

We are ceasing to quote the Hearst Press as a symbol of sensationalism. Many of our own newspapers have caught the trick and yield nothing to New York and Chicago ! After all, if we go back to the eighteenth century nothing could well be more sensational than our own Press. Gossip-writers got away with libels on well-known people in a manner that makes the Lord Donegals and Castlerosses of to-day gasp with envy. Here is a cutting from my scrapbook which must have been pleasing to the gallant sailor to whom it referred. It appeared in a paper called the *Jockey Club*.

"A Gentleman far less distinguished for skill and bravery as a n-v-l c-m-d-r than his amiable and beautiful daughter, arrayed in her native robes of virgin innocence, has long been for general utility and good-natured offices in the circle of her very extensive acquaintance, and above all, for her singular address and condescension in encouraging that liberal unshackled intercourse between the sexes which yields such an exquisite zest to the enjoyment of fashionable life.

The actions of the g-l-t A-m-r-l were never confined to the sphere of his profession ; they soar to a higher pitch. Br-kes's is the grand theatre of action where our hero shines most conspicuous. Great as his knowledge may be in naval tactics, his art and dexterity in the *tactics* of quinze and piquet still must bear the palm. In the one merit is of a mere negative nature, consisting rather in what he *might* have done than in



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what he has done ; in the other it is positive and affirmative. It speaks for itself and thousands can give evidence in proof of his superiority. The difference in these two kinds of action consists in this : one being an exertion in the service of his country : the other being a more profitable exertion for the benefit of himself."

The article continues in the same strain, leaving not a scrap of honour to the father or virtue to the daughter, exposing her love affairs and also bringing in the famous Mrs. Fitzherbert. It says :

" Our fair enthusiast has long held the first rank in the favour of the great female p-r-s-n-ge, Mrs. F-h-b-t, the confidante of her secrets, the friend of her heart."

Hearst, by the way, was never deceived by President Wilson's fine phrases regarding his pet scheme, the League of Nations. From the first, though recognizing its ideals, he foresaw how impossible they would be to accomplish and he kept up a steady crusade against it. He saw, too, how inevitably the impossible demands with which the Peace Conference shackled Germany would prevent Europe from settling down into normal conditions. " Thus bad begun and worse remains behind."

Alice Head finds her work extraordinarily interesting, but extremely strenuous. Not only has she to keep in touch with everything that concerns women, everything that goes on in the art world, and to know exactly what is the taste of the reading public, she has to control the staffs of four popular magazines—and some of her most clever feminine colleagues can be temperamental !—and to keep a close watch on financial matters. She does it all, guiding her team kindly and considerately, but with a firm hand.

The secret of her serenity is, I think, her keen sense of humour. She once said to me, " If you cannot laugh both at yourself and others, you are lost."

MR. HUGH KINGSMILL



MR. HUGH KINGSMILL

## MR. HUGH KINGSMILL

*Introduced by Derek Patmore*

“BY their fruits ye shall know them,” we are told in *Holy Writ*, but in the present age—which will probably be known to posterity as the *Megaphone Age*, people are not disposed to accept so simple a criterion of values ; at any rate, not literary values. Ripeness is by no means all ! They will not “praise famous men” until they know all about them—their personalities, their domestic life, their sex-reactions and, above all, how much they earn, for if they are not “best sellers” they are obviously not worth bothering about.

I have never met Mr. Kingsmill and know him only as the author of an admirable biography of *Frank Harris*—which I would include among the dozen best post-war biographies—a compiler of several amusing anthologies, a witty parodist and a man who loves and respects literature. One, too, who having sat at the feet of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Johnson and Goethe, has little patience with modern literary eccentricities. It is a striking reflection on the taste of the reading public that he has not yet achieved the success to which his brilliant abilities entitle him, but, then, he has never learned to exploit—*Hugh Kingsmill* !

As Mr. Colson points out in his essay :

“One of the reasons for Kingsmill’s lack of popular success, is, I think, that he has not yet found himself. He is torn between too many enthusiasms ; novelist, biographer, parodist, essayist, he cannot make up his mind which is his real *métier*.”

Now in these days of specialization in every sphere of activity, such an attitude is dangerous. The public—whether it be the pseudo-intellectual public, which used to swear by Aldous Huxley, or the man in the street (the suburban street) whose mentality has been so cleverly exploited by Mr. Beverley Nichols—likes to be able to pick up a book by one of his favourite authors knowing exactly what is inside, just as it does when it buys a pound of tea or a packet of cigarettes. Mr. Kingsmill does not give it that sense of security.

But a writer of his calibre is bound to come into his kingdom sooner or later, even though it be, so to speak, "bounded in a nutshell," and Mr. Colson's witty and provocative essay should help to bring about this desirable consummation.

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"What sort of truths do the majority rally round? Truths that are decrepit with age. When a truth is so old that it is in a fair way to become a lie."—IBSEN, *An Enemy of the People*.

AN author of, let us say, 1860, who wished to sketch the portrait of some literary celebrity of his day, must have found it difficult to decide on his victim: he had an *embarras de choix*: of men, too, whose reputations have survived their lifetimes and thus justified the esteem in which they were held by their contemporaries.

Was he a critic of fiction? He could choose between such novelists as Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, George Borrow, George Eliot and Wilkie Collins. Of history, or *belles lettres* in general? Carlyle, J. A. Froude, Macaulay, Matthew Arnold, Newman, or Pater, all brilliant writers and highly interesting personalities, offered excellent subject matter for his pen, while if poetry attracted him he was fortunate indeed, for those were the days when poets not only flourished exceedingly, but both looked and acted as "sich." Swinburne, the Brownings, the Rossettis, Edward Fitzgerald and Coventry Patmore held the boards, and he might—an he dared!—criticize the lordly Tennyson himself.

The writer of to-day who essays a similar task finds it even more difficult to make his choice. Not because there are so many literary celebrities of real significance to choose from, but because there are so few, though if the advertisements of publishers are

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to be believed, at least three or four "great" new novels appear every week. But how many of these masterpieces are read six months after their publication? Arnold Bennett—I include him as he died so lately—will be remembered by not more than two of his novels; Wells by—*perhaps*—three or four, and Somerset Maugham has never again approached the level of achievement to which he attained in that brilliant novel, *Of Human Bondage*, and in the admirable collection of short stories, *The Trembling of a Leaf*. Among biographers and historians, Lytton Strachey—who will undoubtedly survive both his own popularity and its temporary eclipse—has had no successor. Philip Guedalla is clever, but he cannot make the dry bones of history live as did Strachey, and the Roman Catholic bias of Hilaire Belloc makes much of his writing inaccurate. We are living in an age of highly efficient mediocrity, at least as far as literature and the arts are concerned.

This, however, is not intended to suggest that we have no writers of talent and distinction: on the contrary there are many such, and among them is the subject of my sketch.

Hugh Kingsmill has up to the present by no means met with the success he deserves; perhaps he is to be congratulated on that account. The late Edward Garnett who, at Dent's and, later on, when he was with Chatto & Windus, was an inspiration to so many writers, had a poor opinion of those who speedily became "best sellers." His relations with Galsworthy cooled distinctly when that worthy novelist became the darling of the middle classes. And yet, as Dr. Inge says, literature flourishes best when it is half a trade, half an art. One of the reasons for Kingsmill's lack of popular success is that he has not yet found himself. He is torn between too many enthusiasms; novelist, biographer, parodist, essayist, he cannot make up his mind as

to his real *métier*. He loves all literature, and he also loves humanity—which is not literary. Like so many of this rather disillusioned generation, he is passionately interested in the eternal question *Quo Vadis?* and in the search for something better than the hideous nightmare of hatred and impotence which is all that Europe has to show for its two thousand years of Christian civilization.

Though essentially of to-day, Kingsmill is not a modernist in the sense generally associated with the word "modern." His foundations were laid on solid ground: Shakespeare, Cervantes, Johnson, Goethe; on the eternal verities which alone have any survival value. There are a certain number of writers nowadays who—perhaps appalled by the enormous spate of books which threatens to overwhelm the reading public—try to attract attention by being eccentric or incomprehensible. Among them are Joyce, and Gertrude Stein, who are merely amusing literary mountebanks. These eccentrics are particularly numerous among poets. The unspeakable Pound has carried the cult of meaningless ugliness a long way, but he has not succeeded quite so well as Edith Sitwell's latest discovery, Dylan Thomas. Perhaps the reader will discover beauties in the following poem which Miss Sitwell considers superb. It is far too subtle for me. I can only feel that the "long world's gentleman" in sharing his bed with Cancer, got what he deserved:

"Altarwise by owl-light in the halfway-house  
The gentleman lay graveward with his furies;  
Abaddon in the hang-nail cracked from Adam,  
And, from his fork, a dog among the fairies,  
The atlas-eater with a jaw for news  
Bit out the mandrake with to-morrow's scream.



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Then, penny-eyed, that gentleman of wounds,  
Old cock from nowhere and the heaven's egg,  
With bones unbuttoned to the halfway winds,  
Hatched from the windy salvage on one leg,  
Scraped at my cradle in a walking word  
That night of time under the Christward shelter,  
I am the long world's gentleman, he said,  
And share my bed with Capricorn and Cancer."

Well ! " If this young man can understand things far too deep for me, why, what a very deep young man this deep young man must be ! " One cannot imagine that there is any future for that sort of thing. If an author has anything to say really worth while, why must he say it so obscurely that one has to translate it into other language in order to arrive at his meaning ? The instrument left us by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, which many generations of poets and prose writers of genius have polished and perfected, is capable of expressing every shade of feeling ; every thought that language is able to express. Shorn of his pretensions, his pseudo-science and his modern catchwords, man in general remains a being of elementary emotions that never vary. His perception is limited ; his ear not sufficiently acute to adjust itself to an entirely new gamut of sound. If you doubt this you have only to go to a concert of ultra-modern music. On leaving the hall you will not hear any of the audience humming or whistling the themes of the compositions they have been listening to, as they do after a Beethoven or a Wagner concert. Great writers, as also great composers, are *never iconoclasts*. They create *new* values, but they do not cast away existing ones.

Kingsmill has nothing in common with the literary freaks. He is disillusioned like the rest of us, and he is also cynical, but

his cynicism is seldom unkind ; it is akin to that of Anatole France's exquisite creation, M. Jerome Coignard, who *méprisa les hommes avec tendresse*. Considering how kindly a race we English are, it is curious how cruel is much of our humour, especially that of the mid-nineteenth century. If you look over an old volume of *Punch* you will find that the point of nearly all the jokes lies in the social or physical discomfiture or humiliation of someone, or in the financial straits of the poor. But Kingsmill's irony is sometimes not without a touch of malice. In writing to condole with me on the loss of a very old friend he said : " I was very sorry to hear of ——'s death. I felt as if it was the death of someone I knew, owing to your gift of interesting others in your own life—a gift of which I have never felt myself the master when in your society " !

I do not think he is a good novelist ; an opinion he does not share with me. Like Aldous Huxley, he uses the novel as a peg on which to hang himself. Now the ultimate test of a novel is its capacity both to hold our attention as a story and to interest us in its *dramatis personæ*. The characters must arouse in us feelings of either sympathy or dislike and we must be keenly interested in their fate ; in other words they must *live*. If they do not, the book is still-born, no matter how admirably it may be written.

Take that—in some ways—quite remarkable novel of Huxley's, *Point Counter Point*. There is enough interesting material in it for twenty stimulating essays, but after reading it, who can remember the name of a single one of its characters, or care for a moment what happens to any of them ? The *born* novelist is obsessed, carried away, by the characters he has created. Very often they control him ; he does not know what they are going to say or do or what will be their fate

until they themselves resolve the question for him. Those of a novel of the school of *Point Counter Point*, on the other hand, are merely mental abstractions of their creator, whose opinions they voice. For that purpose alone they are and were created.

It is so with Kingsmill, but he is more human than Huxley and he does not suffer from that odd *W.C.* complex which is continually revealing itself in Huxley's novels. What is there, by the way, in seasickness, the natural functions of the body, from love to lavatories, garbage, prostitutes and pathology, which so attracts post-war writers? It spoils many of T. S. Eliot's poems, which is a pity, for at his best he has a touch of poetic genius. I infinitely prefer the teeth like pearls, the cherry lips and daffodil hair of Lord Alfred Douglas and the poets of the 'nineties to Eliot's sky "like an etherized patient on an operating-table"!

In Kingsmill's novels, as in Huxley's, the characters are admirably drawn, they speak their clever lines and behave more or less as human beings do behave, and yet, to me at least, they have no concrete existence outside the covers of the book. Charles Dickens, despite the fact that his writing was often slipshod in the extreme; that he knew no half-lights; no colours but black and white; that his pathos was nauseating and his culture almost nil, invented people of such immense vitality that we follow their adventures breathlessly, and even to-day most of us who have reached middle age could name at random half a dozen of them. Both Thackeray and Trollope gave birth to immortals. I know Becky Sharpe: she lives in London now; and you can still meet Mrs. Proudie in almost any cathedral city, while some of the inhabitants of Jane Austen's world, narrow and commonplace as it was, will live for ever, for they, like many other famous characters of fiction, have escaped from literature into life.

No matter what guise in which Kingsmill's characters appear, their voice is always the "voice of Jacob." But what a clever voice it is ! Take his book of short stories, *The Dawn's Delay*. On almost every page you will find something worth remembering, if only for quotation. For instance : "Curiosity is not a popular virtue in England ; a nation with a high standard of private and public morality and a correspondingly strong prejudice against disinterested inquiry." Or, "Unlike the majority of agnostics I am not particularly proud of having achieved the complex and delicate feat of being ignorant." Of Bernard Shaw he writes : "His deepest feeling seems to be resentment against those who feel deeply. He couldn't bear to think that love and war involve intense suffering ; they must be presented as comic, except in so far as they interfere with Shaw's moral passion for reforming mankind—the one genuine passion, he insists. But does Shaw feel even this passion : Thoughts are the fruit on the tree of passion, and Shaw's thoughts are but artificial apples after all ; vivid, highly coloured, but unsatisfactory to the taste." Arnold Bennett, Hilaire Belloc, Wells, Chesterton are all targets for his verbal fireworks, but alas ! in real life people are rarely amusing—perhaps that is why they prefer fiction which portrays them as lovers, captains of industry, travellers, criminals or detectives ; anything rather than as wits.

But whatever may be one's opinion of Kingsmill as a novelist, there is no doubt that he is a born biographer. He makes his subject live with all that vitality with which he is unable to endow the creations of his own imagination. The writing of biography demands a talent quite other than that of the novelist ; the latter must give birth to his literary children ; the former must raise them from the dead. It is a talent, more—

over, which needs high culture and a profound and subtle understanding of human nature, for, as Anatole France says : *Elle suppose un affinement intellectuel que de longs siècles d'art ont pu seuls produire.* Kingsmill's life of that preposterous person Frank Harris, who managed almost by brute force to impose himself so successfully on the literary world of London in the 'nineties, is one of the most fascinating books I have ever read. Had it been called *The Odyssey of a Cad* or some such title, it would, I am convinced, have been a best-seller, as it is, indeed, stranger than fiction.

"To recreate this soul," wrote Middleton Murry with reference to Harris's very second-rate and superficial work on Shakespeare, "was one of the highest tasks that a great artist could undertake." Kingsmill has recreated the soul of Harris and it is not a pleasing spectacle. He gives us the man with all his vulgarity, dishonesty, bombast and lechery, making us understand at the same time the personal magnetism, the opportunism and the genuine journalistic talent which enabled him to scrape acquaintance with the great and exploit them to the top of his bent.

The book, apart from its value as a picture of the period it covers, contains many shrewd comments on men and matters. Of Lord Randolph Churchill's Tory Democracy, Kingsmill says : "The core of this democracy was a profound contempt for middle-class Liberalism, politically and socially. Its aim, so far as it had any concrete aim, was to exploit the middle classes for the benefit of the upper classes and the amusement of the lower." Of Crosland, that Napoleon of the saloon bar, now almost forgotten, he writes : "He was a great Victorian Bohemian, two parts pamphleteer to one part poet ; one of those men who owe their reputation among their contempo-

raries to what they might have achieved, and who would perhaps have had less reputation had they done more to earn one."

We can all of us call to mind men whom that description exactly fits, and how true it is, as he remarks apropos of Harris, that "the English do not care for highly flavoured personalities, though they will put up with them if they occupy important positions." I like his summing up of the Victorian public school, "with its half-maudlin, half-barbarous paganism, which made a religion of games and treated intellect and a love of poetry as effeminate." Kingsmill here utters a *cri du cœur* for he himself was brought up in an atmosphere of narrow evangelical piety in which art and literature were looked on askance, and the theatre was anathema.

There is a good deal in the book about Harris's relations with Wilde. He wrote a life of Wilde, which for bias, inaccuracy and lack of comprehension is probably unequalled. Sherard, another of the Wilde circle, has recently added another volume to the vast bibliography of that unhappy genius, of which the last and most interesting chapter was contributed by Kingsmill. Sherard has now made his peace with Lord Alfred Douglas and professes a profound admiration for him—the surest basis for friendship with anyone. It is a pity that the protagonists in the wretched affair cannot make up their minds to give it a long rest. The best of Wilde's work is assured of its place. He is dead; *Requiescat in pace*

A very delightful and enlightening biography is Kingsmill's *Samuel Johnson*. He does not pretend to have discovered any new data, but he loves and so understands him. The Dr. Johnson who emerges from his pages is a singularly attractive and rather pathetic figure. Lonely, in spite of his hosts of acquaintances, highly moral; religious, but unhappy in his religion because

his reason refused to endorse the cheques of his instincts and he was never able to stifle his doubts ; generous to a fault, intolerant and merciful, proud and humble. Kingsmill gives us many anecdotes of his relations with the celebrities of his day, some of which, if not new, are little known, and also many examples of his brilliant wit, deep wisdom and the essential nobility of his character.

Kingsmill is, I think, not quite fair to Boswell. Certainly Boswell was small-minded, a gossip and often an ill-natured one, a sensualist and above all a snob, but he had a wholehearted admiration and affection for Johnson, from whom he suffered all things. Perhaps each had the effect of an irritant on the other though, of course, much of Johnson's irritability was due to ill-health. Naturally, Boswell omitted many important facts in writing his book ; he was too close to his subject to be able to estimate accurately the value of the material at his disposal, especially that which concerned their personal relations. In writing this life of someone whom one has known intimately, prejudice must inevitably play its part. Then, too, every one who writes a book writes himself into every page of it. But, all said and done, the fact remains that Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, after more than a century and a half, still holds its place as one of the most—possibly *the* most—vital biographies ever written. Would Johnson's reputation have stood the test of time without it ? Possibly he might have survived as a famous personality of the eighteenth century ; not, however, by his books, which hardly hint at the greatness of the man himself. Like Wilde, he put his talent into his writing and his genius into his life.

Kingsmill was not wise in allowing himself to undertake the debunking of Dickens. He dislikes Dickens and everything he stood for, so could not possibly treat him dispassionately.

Then again, Dickens, like the Albert Memorial, is a national monument and there are still many people who feel that in attacking national monuments you are attacking the British constitution. The reader may perhaps say : " But Lytton Strachey did the same thing in his *Queen Victoria*." True, but he chose his moment well. People were beginning to ask themselves if the great figures of that—in retrospect—golden age were all they were supposed to be, and Strachey's brilliant and amusing book, which struck an entirely new note in biography, enchanted everyone. But, while knocking down idols like ninepins, the Victoria he draws for us is an infinitely more credible figure than the Victoria of legend, because more human, kinder, wiser—in short a woman, with all the inconsistencies of the ordinary woman and five times her intelligence.

Kingsmill considers Dickens insincere. In a letter to me he said : " In my experience the popular writer, if he has a strain of genius, is always a miserable fellow, *vide* Dickens, Byron, Barrie, etc. etc.—and he is miserable because he plays up to the herd against his instinct." Here I disagree with him. I am absolutely sure that no writer, composer or painter ever earns great popularity unless he is sincerely convinced of his own sincerity—or insincerity ; Dickens, during the throes of book-birth, loved the children of his fantasy ; lived with them ; laughed with them, wept with them, dreamed of them. To him there was nothing impossible in their utterly impossible goodness or badness, sentimentality or callousness, and when his book was finished he was for a time like a bereft parent. Barrie, too, *must* have believed in " The Little Minister," " David," and the rest, however much some of us may have longed to have five minutes alone with them ! And I have not the slightest doubt that the composer of that immortal ballad,



"Have you any News of my Boy Jack?" was as thrilled with the joy of creation when he wrote it as was Bach when writing his *Sanctus*.

Kingsmill is himself intensely sincere and his contempt for the ordinary shibboleths accepted by the majority; the truths "so old that they are in a fair way to become lies," is quite genuine. But it is no use kicking against the pricks. As he himself says in one of his books, "A writer can only give life to what he feels and not to what he would like to feel."

As a parodist Kingsmill is unique, and I cannot understand why his brilliant book, *The Table of Truth*,<sup>1</sup> did not go into innumerable editions. It contains a devastatingly clever parody of Lytton Strachey—*Joseph (from "Eminent Egyptians")*. The Joseph, we are told, whom his exacerbad brothers lowered into the well, was a very different person from the Joseph whom they pulled out again. "What had happened? What influence was it or what revelation, which had worked in a moment, as it were, so drastic, so far-reaching, so durable a change? We all know where truth is hidden. Was it truth, then, which Joseph found at the bottom of the well? Well, perhaps hardly that. Truth is not a commodity which a politician—even in his most embryonic stage—would be likely to recognize if he happened to stumble on it. No, it was not Truth which Joseph found: it was something else, something less recondite, something much more useful; it was Tact!"

Here is an amusing burlesque of A. E. Housman's manner:

"What, still alive at twenty-two,  
A clean upstanding chap like you?  
Sure, if your throat 'tis hard to slit,  
Slit your girl's and swing for it.

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<sup>1</sup> Jarrolds, 1934.

"Like enough you won't be glad  
When they come to hang you, lad ;  
But bacon's not the only thing  
That's cured by hanging on a string.

"So, when the spilt ink of the night  
Spreads o'er the blotting-pad of light,  
Lads whose job is still to do  
Shall whet their knives and think of you."

One could go on quoting, but it would not be fair. Wilde, Sherlock Holmes, Lewis Carroll, Wells and Carlyle (on present-day writers) are caricatured inimitably. I can only recommend my readers to buy the book without a *Dawn's Delay*.

Kingsmill, as I have said above, has not yet found himself. In due time he will, I am sure, come into his own, but Time's feet seem to be shod with lead to him who waits. Perhaps he does not feel quite at home in this world, not that—to use his own phrase about Harris, a phrase which fits many people—"he was born uneasy." Rather that most of the fleeting pleasures which help that elusive person, the man in the street (whose ready-made opinions he so despises) to bear with the changes and chances of this mortal life: music, art, games, food, wine and so on have little to say to him. But he is a brilliant conversationalist, and is, perhaps, happiest when with a good companion he can "tire the sun with talking and send him down the sky."

He has for me an exasperated affection. I hope that this essay will not have the effect of causing only the exasperation to survive !



MR. PERCY COLSON



## MR. PERCY COLSON

*Introduced by Edward Donough O'Brien*

IT is now some years since I first met Percy Colson. The venue was a restaurant—and what more appropriate spot for a first encounter with one so urban and so urbane? If I remember rightly it was in Leoni's Quo Vadis Restaurant in Dean Street. The season of the year eludes recall.

I remember, however, that Percy Colson introduced himself, told three excellent if slightly scandalous stories of that stratum of society in which the French believe that the true, the authentic *ig-leef* is to be found, and disappeared as quickly as he had come, flinging a lunch invitation over his shoulder as he did so. I think his appointment was with a Dean.

For there is always a faint flavour of the ecclesiastical about Percy. Indeed, if it is not *lèse-majesté* to suggest such a thing of the biographer of the essentially Anglican Bishop of London Percy Colson ought to have been a Roman prelate. Perhaps not of this age—but of an earlier more spacious one when Roman prelates were less conscientious. He would have fitted charmingly and snugly into the amiable backstairs-intriguing life of the Eternal City, comforting himself with the reflection that the benighted heathens of his titular see (*in partibus*) were scarcely worth bothering one's digestion about.

Sometimes, again, I think of Percy Colson as a modern John Aubrey, moving eagerly (with a slightly *méchant* wit)

through a throng of amused and amusing friends. I hope he keeps a diary. One day it should throw a will-o'-the-wisp reflection on the problems and personalities of our age. I doubt, however, whether Percy Colson will achieve that spare, parenthetical style, that child-like wonder which makes the great seventeenth-century "magpie of curiosities" such delightful reading. Writing books about bishops is an enemy to incisiveness and somehow I can't quite see Percy cutting such a gem as, "Ben Jonson had one Eie lower than t'other, like Clun, the player (perhaps he begot Clun ?)."

In one way, however, he differs from Aubrey who described himself as "roving and magotie-headed." Percy may rove, but he always knows what he wants.

For unruffled persistence the Ancient Mariner had nothing on Mr. Colson, and for pertinacity Bruce's Spider was a flabby-willed insect compared with Percy.

Proof? Proof lies in the fact that Percy Colson prevailed on me to write this in the rush of the last twelve hours before departure for Switzerland. "Prevailed" though, is, as Flaubert might have wittily remarked, not quite *le mot juste*.

## A SELF PORTRAIT

### *More Victorian than Georgian*

"Les petites marionnettes font, font, font,  
Trois petits tours et puis s'en vont."

*Old French.*

I HAVE often been accused of the fault which I attributed to Hugh Kingsmill and Aldous Huxley—using the characters I write about to voice my own opinions. This is true only in so much as it is true of every biographer of either the quick or the dead. It is impossible to appraise the work of another without being to some extent influenced by one's own reactions to it, one's likes and dislikes, for on the door leading to the subconscious mind is written the word *Ego*. And, after all, *Ego* is the object which interests each of us more passionately than anything else on earth. "To be fond of oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance," said one of the characters in Wilde's *Intentions*.

People have always fascinated me, especially those who have done something worth doing. Writing about the brilliant people who figure in this volume has been a great pleasure to me and that—if they are as altruistic as I believe them to be—will be a source of equal gratification to them! They have taught me much. Dr. Barnes has confirmed my conviction of the futility of life without the background he gives it in the final chapters of his *Gifford Lectures*. Sir James Jeans has made me feel, if possible, even more insignificant than I felt before studying his works, and at the same time he has driven home



the lesson taught by Dr. Barnes, for the marvels he describes cannot be merely fortuitous. And Jeans with the humility of the great scientist is not afraid to say, "I do not know."

"There was the Door to which I found no key ;  
There was the Veil through which I could not see."

It was interesting to contrast the restless complex mind of Hugh Kingsmill, utterly sincere and scornful of the sorry ideals of the masses as he sees them, with the strength and simplicity of Lilian Baylis, absorbed in the great work she is doing to raise those same ideals ; selfless, sure of an after-life and unafraid of the present one. And the endeavours of John Gielgud to give us the counterfeit presentment of life ; of William Walton to voice it in music ; of Reginald Eves to go quietly about his business unperturbed by the turmoil of the outside world ; of Thalben-Ball to make the music at the Temple Church worthy of its setting and his organ-playing as truly an act of homage to God as was the juggling of the *Jongleur de Notre Dame* ; of Lord Hewart to "truly and indifferently administer Justice" and of Alice Head to help her sex, have interested me profoundly.

I had thought of including an essay on some politician of note, but he who writes of politics in these days is out of date before his ink is dry. Apropos of politicians, what can they do except devise expedients to avert immediate disasters ? Nothing can prevent the undercurrents of popular opinion from—like volcanic torrents—forcing their way upward at the appointed time and engulfing everything around them. If statesmen wish to preserve the *status quo*, and cling to traditions which have worked well enough in the past, they are exposed to the abuse of all those whom the past has used badly. If, on the other hand, they realize that every age presents new problems which must be

faced with new methods and, above all, if they attack the privileged interests, the entire conservative forces unite in solid phalanx against them. But for the man who has the hide of a rhinoceros, the adaptability of the Vicar of Bray and unbounded belief in himself, politics must be an amusing game—which brings us back to *Ego*.

To be a complete *ego-centric* gives a man an enormous advantage in life, provided that his egoism is backed by genuine ability. If you are serenely sure of your own superiority, the very fact of your certainty causes others to believe in you, and as most people are delighted to be spared the trouble of thinking, they accept your claims without question. These self-centred people are not selfish in the ordinary way ; they can be charming if you burn a little incense before their shrine. If you accused them of selfishness they would be deeply hurt. It is simply that they are *unaware* of other people where their own interests are concerned. When—as was the case with Wagner—the complete egoist has genius, he rides roughshod over every one. Even when he is stupid as well as egoistic he is generally happier than other men, for his vanity tells him what a fine fellow he is and his stupidity prevents him from seeing what a fool he is for thinking so. According to himself he is never wrong and *così è si vi pare* ! Good egoists, too, never suffer from that cursed sickness, self-doubt and introspection, the modern crown of thorns, which paralyses the energies of so many of us.

When a man is getting into years—horrible phrase, and more horrible state of being !—and has lost all his illusions, he begins to discover, that is if he has good health, that life can be very agreeable even though youth has gone. It is a great mistake to try to be young too long. “ Confound not the distinctions of thy Life which Nature hath divided : that is, Youth, Adolescence,

Manhood and Age, nor in these divided Periods, wherein thou art in a manner Four, conceive thyself but one." . . . "Do as a Child but when thou art a Child, and ride not on a Reed at twenty," says Sir Thomas Browne, who was a connoisseur of life. One advantage of age is that you no longer feel it necessary to do things you dislike because other people think you ought to do them. In my heart I always hated playing outdoor games, except tennis, and I was secretly delighted when I could give them up decently ; especially golf, at which I was never any good. I spent a small fortune on lessons. The professional—a Scot—tried his best to teach me how to "address the ball" as he called it. I addressed it with the utmost politeness, but the damned thing invariably sulked and made for the nearest pond or bunker. Soft answers do not always turn away wrath, at any rate, not with golf balls !

Then again, when you are no longer young it is a good thing to be obliged to work, that is if the work is interesting and you can do it when you like. It helps you to forget how swiftly the sands in the Hour-glass are running out. Providence is a very bad business manager. In the springtime, life calls to the young, offering a thousand delights, a thousand pleasant occupations. "Youth's a stuff will not endure," it sings—but, alas ! poor youth in its hundreds of thousands the world over is caged at an age when its smiling eyes have hardly looked at life. They tip it out of its little box in the suburbs to catch the 8.40 train, mew it up in another little box until six o'clock in the evening, and then reverse the process. This for fifty weeks in the year, and the other two weeks—being thoroughly tamed—it is allowed to revel as best it can at some overcrowded seaside resort, on what it has managed to save out of the thirty pieces of silver.

Things ought to be arranged differently. All the tiresome

routine work should be done by the elderly, for whom the time of the singing of birds is gone, and the young should be subsidized to enable them to enjoy life "while the evil days come not," and each lad thinks the fair was made for him.

"When first my way to fair I took  
 Few pence in purse had I,  
 And long I used to stand and look  
 At things I could not buy.

Now times are altered : if I care  
 To buy a thing, I can ;  
 The pence are here and here's the fair,  
 But where's the lost young man ? "

I wish I had been born with the trick of writing popular fiction. If you have it you can write the same novel over and over again. Lucky writers, such as Ethel M. Dell, Charles Garvice, Ruby M. Ayres or Beverley Nichols, each in their particular style know by instinct exactly how to please the semi-literate ; the countless women who try to find in books the romance and glamour which life has denied them. Each generation of novelists has its own formula, which in its essential is, indeed, eternal, varying only in that it is refitted to the pattern of contemporary life. I can remember the days of the cold, proud beauty, daughter of a noble but ruined earl. She was always loved by a rich and wicked baronet and the handsome and virtuous son of a self-made man, who, of course, won her in the last chapter. There was generally a dry old lawyer with a face "yellow and wrinkled like one of his parchments," thin lips and a heart of gold ; an elderly aunt with a sharp tongue who gave the cold, proud beauty—whose outward coldness hid a veritable inward volcano—excellent advice, and a faithful old butler. You can find them all now, rather more slangy and less

given to uttering noble sentiments, but otherwise unchanged. And now, as then, there is always a happy ending. The neurotic, unhappy novel appeals to a very small and neurotic public.

After the novel in popularity come, perhaps, biographies and memoirs, but a long way after. What biography ever written sold like *If Winter Comes*, or *Gone with the Wind*! *The Story of San Michele* had an enormous sale, but then it was quite an exceptional book. Such books are very rare. Most of the enormous number of memoirs published make one realize the truth of Carlyle's saying, "A well-written life is almost as rare as a well-spent one." I imagine, however, that a good many of the famous men who write their autobiographies—or get someone to write them—do it as a defence against what their biographers will say about them.

It is not easy to write the autobiography of another man. I had a shot at it once. It was that of a dull and inconspicuous peer, and I found it extraordinarily difficult to get inside his mind, or to put myself in his place. A well-known German vineyard proprietor once told me that he had spent an immense amount of money in trying to produce a good red wine of the Bordeaux type. He treated the soil as it is treated in France, planted French vines and engaged expert French growers and workmen to carry out the entire work. The result was a typical German wine. Well, in spite of all my endeavours to write like a noble lord, the autobiography turned out to be *me*, masquerading as my dull peer! Personally I think I made him infinitely more intelligent and interesting than he really was, but he did not see eye to eye with me. He was afraid no one would recognize him! I could not rise to the occasion when he talked about our noble King and far-flung Empire when we were dining alone with no one but the butler to impress with our patriotism.

He was not a happy man, my dull peer. What is it, by the way, which makes so many people who have lived comparatively blameless lives for over seventy years, so depressed and disappointed? Sidney Smith attributed it partly to our devastating passion for doing something all the time, however futile. We are not, he said, easily amused and interested in life itself. What would he have said to the idiotic films and the incessant noise of the wireless with which people who have no mental resources drug themselves? Sidney Smith, however, knew where true joys are to be found: he loved London and good conversation and, above all, he loved good eating and drinking. "O, my Lord, there is death in the pot," said some Biblical character whose name I cannot recall to some prophet whose identity also eludes me. But it is a slow death and a pleasant one!

I, too, never tire of London. I love its kindly, good-natured inhabitants, its theatres, restaurants, concerts; Bond Street and its art dealers, St. James's and its Clubs. How, I wonder, did the Athenæum get the reputation of being a gloomy mausoleum, sacred to octogenarians and sleeping clergymen? It is one of the most friendly and pleasant places in London. And I love the shops; my long-suffering tailor, my cigarette shop, and Fortnum & Mason who have been where they are for over two centuries. What a blessing it is that the silly snobbish prejudice against trade is at last dead! I cannot for the life of me see why it should be more elegant to sell people stocks and shares than to sell them food and raiment.

To the imaginative man a shop like Fortnum's conjures up a world of romance. It is a veritable cave of Aladdin. To feed it, caravans have crossed the burning desert, bringing strange merchandise: spices, fruits, ivories, precious stuffs, sweet

perfumes ; divers have searched the sea for its pearls ; hunters have sweltered in the heat of the jungle and frozen in the cold of the Arctic regions to furnish it with rare feathers and rich furs. France sends it vintages which would have rejoiced the heart of Omar ; truffles, too, and foie gras ; Astrachan sends its caviare ; China her choicest teas ; Africa her most fragrant coffee. Men of all races, creeds and colours, indeed, labour to fill these fascinating counters.

Its origin, too is romantic. If legend be true, Fortnum, the founder, was a page at the Court of Queen Anne. An astute lad, that, for taking advantage of the fact that candles were only used once in the Royal Household, he made a corner in the partially used ones and sold them to economically-minded members of the nobility ! With his profits he set up a stall on the very site now occupied by the firm, selling various other commodities as well as candles. His soul's mate, Mason—also a member of the Royal Household—joined him later, and like the little tree they “grew and grew and grew.”

I hope they will not move or turn themselves into a huge, hideous, modern-looking store, without charm or personality. Very few old London shops still remain practically unchanged. Among them are Lock's in St. James's Street, and Berry's Seventeenth Century wine shop. Think of all the interesting people who have taken Fortnum's in their morning stroll on their way, perhaps, to Christie's or Sotheby's ! Florence Nightingale bought beef-tea for her wounded soldiers, Mrs. Carlyle tells how John Carlyle “with I know not what monument of superhuman generosity” sent her “oranges, figs, French plums and Yorkshire Ham from Fortnum & Mason—which ham is the very best I ever ate.” The immortal “Jorrocks” ordered them to send him “a dozen pots of ‘marmeylade’,”

and Captain Cook, when organizing his first expedition in search of the North Pole, bought his stores there. To-day it is impossible to look in without meeting some one you know, gloating over something fresh in the way of food, or lunching in the charming restaurant.

One of the most—perhaps the most—beautiful of the old shops still remaining in the West-End is “The Old Snuff House,” of Fribourg and Treyer, “At the Sign of the Rasp and Crown, 34 Haymarket.” Built in 1720, it is still in its original state, and still in the possession of the family who first set up shop there. Its interior is as interesting as its exterior is lovely. There are the ceilings blackened with the passing of centuries, the panelled walls with secret cupboards, the oak shelves on which were once lined snuff jars of beautiful design, and the old counter. Quite a number of these charming jars are still in use; two or three of them are yet to be seen in the shop-window.

In the eighteenth century, when to take snuff in the grand manner was one of the social graces, “The Rasp and Crown” was a favourite *rendezvous* for the bucks of the town. Here you would meet Beau Brummell, Charles James Fox and even the Prince Regent.

Snuff has given place to cigarettes, perhaps not altogether to one's advantage. The few snuff-takers who remain certainly never seem to suffer from colds and catarrh, and their nerves are better than those of cigarette smokers. Fribourg's always catered for the “Quality,” and as in the old days they sold the finest snuff obtainable, so to-day they give you the best cigars and cigarettes to be found in London. They do not make a speciality of “fags” for the errand boy or the “Green Elephants” which, Lady Jane tells the Major, are the only cigarettes that satisfy her fastidious taste!



Delightful as London still is, it is, alas ! fast losing its personality. The dignified old Georgian houses and shops are disappearing, giving place to hideous blocks of flats. "Any one for Pentonville?" cried a bus conductor, passing before one of them. Mayfair is completely ruined and Leicester Square is sharing its fate. It is all part of the craze for money and what they call "modern efficiency," which is mechanizing the whole of Europe and crushing all individuality. "I dread the mass mind," said Mr. Baldwin a few months ago. .

An interesting result of the rapid relapse into barbarism of the Germans is the growing importance of London as a musical centre. In France the love of music has never been widespread, and now that Germany has thrown overboard all the humanities, musicians from all over the world are flocking to London. Great vocal and instrumental virtuosi are still a Continental speciality, but almost the only composers of genius to-day are English.

Another thing which interests me is the intense vitality of opera, a form of art which we are constantly assured is at the point of death and which steadfastly refuses to die. A significant sign of this vitality is that the vogue of opera is passing from the social world to the masses. My friend Percy Heming—admirable singer and musician—who with Beecham controls the destinies of both the International Season at Covent Garden and its English Company, tells me that opera is flourishing like a green bay tree in the provinces.

It appears that when the Imperial League of Opera failed to live up to its promises, a certain amount of the money subscribed was not claimed by its donors—some £4000, divided between such cities as Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Edinburgh. A certain enthusiastic opera-lover, a Miss Rose, conceived the

happy idea of helping workers to get their opera on the instalment plan. She realized that these patrons could not possibly afford to hear all the operas they wanted to hear during the brief visits of the London company, so she formed in the different cities opera clubs, each large firm or factory having its representative. The members subscribe a small sum every week, for which they are given vouchers, so when the great event arrives they have, let us say, a pound to spend on opera instead of the few shillings they would otherwise have been able to spare and which they would naturally have spent on tickets for well-known favourites. This helps composers and enables the repertory to be enlarged, for the founders of the plan say, "Won't you give a new composer a chance and go and hear such and such an opera?" or "We are going to revive so and so—so go and hear it."

Again, this system guarantees the company against loss, for it arrives with a large sum in hand. Thus does music struggle in this rich country which has always refused to subsidize it—a short-sighted policy. Of the immense sums spent in armaments 85 per cent. goes in wages, which means that in most places the considerable amount the workers spend on amusements is spent on vulgar and imbecile films, football pools, and dog-racing. It is the gross materialism of the ruling classes which has brought the world to its present ghastly condition.

The young of to-day do not know how pleasant life was in the now almost legendary pre-War days. In some degree it resembled that of Paris in the middle years of the eighteenth century when the same small set of people met each other every day—at routs, the opera, the races, or at each other's houses. Conversationally it was less brilliant—though I have heard very good "table talk" in London. Women might be clamouring

for the vote and emphasizing their claims with feline malice ; unemployment might be a serious question and communism a growing menace, but society went on amusing itself. It was not, however—and therein lay its salvation—so selfish a society as that eighteenth century *clique* of high-born ladies and gentlemen who tolerated politics only so long as they remained a game, and did not trouble about anything so dull as the public welfare. Underneath the English frivolity there is, and always has been, on the part of the privileged classes, a realization of their responsibility towards their less fortunate brethren. It is that sense of responsibility which has kept them alive as a *social*, not merely a *society* force, and made revolution in England unthinkable.

A pleasant feature of the days before the world cried Havoc, was that games were not taken so desperately seriously as they have been during the last few years. This professionalism in sport comes from America. The American makes a business of sport and he has forced his methods on other countries. This has spoilt golf, tennis and bridge for a great many people. The moderately good tennis player nowadays hardly dares to show himself on the tennis court, and bridge is fast ceasing to be a game. Talking about bridge reminds me of an amusing incident told me by Lord Marcus Beresford. It occurred at the Turf Club where at that time the play was rather high. One of the members, General Oliphant, had twice cut the late Noel Fenwick for a partner. Now Fenwick was a very poor player, and after losing the second rubber the General turned to him and made some very uncomplimentary remarks about his play. As the General was an older and a very distinguished man, Fenwick replied quite harmlessly and politely, but he (the General) was not a Pacifist. "I am just fed up with your play, Fenwick, and so is every one else. If I were you I would stop playing bridge

and take my name off the Club. I'll give you fifty pounds if you'll do it."

Fenwick left the room in high dudgeon and half-way down the stairs he met Lord Marcus and said to him : " As a man of the world I want to ask you what you would do under certain circumstances."

" What circumstances ? " asked Lord Marcus.

" I've just had a most unpleasant time in the card-room. Old Oliphant was damned rude because we lost two or three rubbers."

" What did he say ? "

" He said he would give me fifty pounds if I would take my name off the Club."

" If I were you I would wait a day or two and he will probably offer you a hundred," said Marcus with a wicked twinkle in his eye.

Lord Marcus was extraordinarily quick-witted. Just after the King had conferred on Ernest Cassel the honour of K.C.M.G. they met in St. James's Street. Cassel said to him, " I expect you have heard, Markie, that the king has made me a K.C.M.G. As you know, it is the custom in racing to put your name on your horse-boxes. What ought I to do—ought I to put the letters after my name or not ? "

Marcus, deep in thought, did not reply for a moment and then a bright idea occurred to him. He answered, " I'll tell you what I would do. Just put K.C.M. after your name and *put the Gee inside !* "

Lord Marcus was full of anecdotes. Here is one of the late Lord Birkenhead in his early days. " There goes — half-blotto as usual," he once said to a friend, pointing to a man they both knew.

"Yes," was the answer, "it's a pity, such a smart chap, too ; he always looks just *it*."

"You mean 'Gin and It,' " said Birkenhead.

He could be exceedingly rude to people he disliked. It was he, I believe, who made the oft-quoted remark to a badly dressed man for whom he had no use, "Better men cut you than ever cut your clothes."

The other day I was invited to dine at the Savage Club. It was curious to see the "Savages" revelling in the splendid rooms which once saw the brilliant political gatherings of Lord Curzon. Poor Curzon ! he might well have exclaimed, "Oh ! I am Fortune's Fool." To few has she given so much—and so little, for what she gave with one hand she took away with the other. She bestowed upon him birth, good looks, and an imposing presence—and saw to it that he was never free from pain ; she made him ambitious, and took care to thwart his ambitions ; she gave him some of the highest offices the State has to offer, but withheld the one upon which he had set his heart.

With many people his manner was against him. They thought him pompous and, indeed, he often gave one that impression. Pomposity is stupid and vulgar and it is one of the failings that people find it hardest to forgive. We should most of us be more agreeable if we could remember Lord Melbourne's dictum—that no one is worth a rap until he has realized what an utterly ridiculous creature a human being is. To those, however, who knew Curzon well, there was a queer wistful quality about him even in his moments of too great awareness of his own importance. His hauteur was an armour, put on to prevent him yielding to the ever-present physical pain and to protect him from sympathy, which he hated. At times the most trivial annoyance would cause him to lose his self-control : a knife or fork

misplaced on the dinner-table ; a neglected order ; above all, the failure of some subordinate to be duly impressed by George Nathaniel Curzon.

London in one respect has changed enormously for the better and that is in its restaurants. There are now any number of places where you can eat well, from the lordly Ritz to the many charming little restaurants in Soho. And yet English people go on eating the "cuts off the joint," the dull indigestible boiled potatoes and the loathsome slabs of cabbage cooked in water ! I do not think we shall ever become "food-minded." We hear a great deal nowadays about the power of mind over matter, but it seems to me that the influence of matter over mind is quite as important. If—as is certainly true—anger, or a sudden shock can upset the stomach, it is equally true that the stomach can upset the soul. "To detect the flavour of an olive is no less a part of human perfection than to find beauty in the colours of a sunset," said Robert Louis Stevenson.

Sidney Smith speaks often of the subtle and irresistible influence of good food and wine and pleasant manners. Big City men know it. Quite as many important transactions are arranged over the lunch-table as over the telephone. It is a man of very independent mind who cannot be bribed with partridges and a *Château Mouton Rothschild* of 1924 !

I still cling to my favourite restaurants. *Kettner's* where the wine is so good, and my beloved *Leoni's*. *Leoni* has now spread himself and has added another room or two, but prosperity has not spoilt him ; he is still the same kindly, simple soul he ever was. How many young artists have reason to bless him ! Then, too, he has not made the mistake which has spoilt so many restaurants which started well—that of lowering the quality of his food and raising his prices. Nowhere in London can you

eat such Italian dishes. His Cannelloni, for instance, a sort of pancake with chicken, spinach, herbs and other delights. I am glad to think that I had some small share in Leoni's success.

Talking of restaurants, there is an amusing story told of Umberto, the famous *maître d'hôtel* of the Hôtel de Paris at Monte Carlo.

One day a young Englishman who was lunching at the Hôtel de Paris saw sitting alone at a nearby table a very pretty girl who looked friendly. Calling Umberto, he said, "*Dites donc, Umberto. Cette dame-là—elle est très jolie. Est-ce que c'est une femme comme il faut ?*"

The answer came pat.

"*Mais, Monsieur, je dirais que c'est plutôt une femme comme il en faut !*"

I am glad I cannot afford to eat every day at my favourite restaurants. Were I able to do so I should either be dead or a hopeless dyspeptic by this time.

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to plague us."

What a lot has happened during the sixty-odd years I have adorned the world ! When I first went to France it was just beginning to get over the Franco-Prussian war. And there would have been another *Franco-Prussian* war if Hitler had not been prevented from having his way and making common cause with the Spanish Insurgents ! In the course of those years five monarchs have reigned ; there have been three Jubilees—1887, 1897 and 1935 ; three monarchs have been borne to their long home, and one King—putting love before loyalty—has abdicated. And there have been two wars, the South African War and the War which shattered to atoms the old pleasant scheme of things.

I do not care for coronations, funerals and national rejoicings—bunting is almost as bad as banting—but it is interesting and curious to see how powerful is mass psychology. People rejoice and mourn to order ; idolize the same film stars, flying “ aces ” or crooners ; rouse themselves to indignation over the same causes, wear the same clothes and work to death the same slogans. The less responsible papers follow suit, and to judge from their correspondence columns more of their readers ought to be “ certified ” than the number claimed by the said papers in their circulation returns. The trouble is, I think, that though there is a certain general level of education, there is no general culture, so people are not interested in life as a whole ; they are not taught to *read*, but only to *decipher print* ; thus the majority of them are completely disinterested in anything which does not immediately concern their daily lives.

The so-called educated classes are just as bad. Stay at any hotel in a golf, fishing or hunting neighbourhood. The conversation you hear is soul-destroying. I was staying at a hunting hotel for two or three days last winter and this is the kind of table talk one heard at every meal :

Mr. A. : (Looking at his paper) : “ Oh ! I see old Bill Jackson is dead. You remember him, dear ? He used to hunt with the Pytchley.”

Mrs. A. : “ What *are* you talking about ! It was the Quorn.” They argue for several minutes and finally agree that it was the Badminton. Then, perhaps, someone asks : “ Let me see, what year was it that his wife divorced him ? ”

Mr. A. : “ Oh, don’t you remember ? It was the year Frying-pan won the Cambridgeshire.”

I have another rather amusing memory of that hotel. I was looked after by an elderly and very competent chambermaid.



She told me one day that she had been offered a place at the chief hotel in the neighbouring county town where she had a married daughter.

"Why don't you go there? I should think it would be more pleasant for you," said I.

She answered, "Well, sir, I can see the churchyard from my bedroom window here. My husband is buried there and I like to look at his grave and say to myself, '*There you are and you can't get out.*'"

Last summer, not having been abroad for some time—to which my poverty but not my will consented—I decided to go to Italy and see what it was like after all these years of Fascist government. I have recorded my impressions in another of these sketches. Among the places I visited was that enchanting village Cannero on Lago Maggiore, where my friend Leoni was born and where he is a great personage. I stayed at a charming little hotel—the Hôtel d'Italie—and my expenses, fares included, were less than they would have been had I stayed at an English resort in a good hotel. You can make delightful excursions from Cannero: on foot to little hill towns which still have their *Festas* and their picturesque religious processions on the day of their patron saint and on other church festivals; by boat to the various Swiss and Italian resorts on the lake, and by car to Monte Toce, where there is one of the largest waterfalls in the world. I went there on a blazing August day, by that wonderful mountain road which Mussolini had made three or four years ago. It was snowing when we got to the top.

Why are there no resorts in England where—when the weather is fine—you can eat good food on a pleasant terrace in the open air as you do at Cannero? We have any number of places in England so lovely that they make you catch your

breath—Ludlow, Dunster, Sandwich or Clovelly for instance—and how pleasant they would be if only there a little more civilized in that respect ! But no ; you must take your meals in a stuffy dining-room, and eat without grumbling the beef and mutton, the dull vegetables and the undressed salad on which you are expected to pour the repulsive, sticky compound which looks like furniture polish. I cannot understand why those societies which look after your morals and make such a fuss if a boy bathes without a costume, do not proceed against undressed salads !

At Milan, where I stayed a night, I dined at a most amusing and highly original restaurant—Giannino's, in the Via Amore Sciesa. You enter a narrow corridor which suddenly widens, and on either side of you are tanks in which crawl crabs, lobsters and all sorts of shellfish, in others swim trout and river fish. Joints, steaks, kidneys and every kind of meat and game hang in refrigerators, while in large earthy beds repose vegetables, in season and out of season. Then you come to the kitchen where you can see all these good things in the act of being cooked. Chickens, joints and game are roasting on turnspits ; great copper casseroles boil merrily, and there is a wonderful stove for roasting small birds rapidly *à la fiamma*.

The restaurant itself is large and airy and the middle floor-space, which is open to the sky, is planted with trees. In the winter it is closed in and orange and lemon trees replace the summer greenery. We dined, Leoni and I, on *Lassagni* cooked to perfection, snipe on toast with a salad, *une tarte maison*, and those large delicious yellow Italian mushrooms to follow. With wine and coffee our bill came to about 70 *lire*—less than 12s. !

On my way back to England I stopped at Dijon for a week or two in the wine country. To most tourists Dijon means

only a voice in the night disturbing their uneasy sleep. "*Dijon, cinq minutes d'arrêt.*" They do not realize that they are passing by one of the loveliest towns in Europe—a veritable poem in stone, full of beautiful old palaces, Gothic churches, medieval streets and houses, and possessing a museum second in France only to the *Louvre*. The Ducal Palace—like Venice—has its pigeons.

"Comme une reine  
Les pigeons bleus, les pigeons gris  
Logent tout près du paradis."

At the *Hôtel de la Clôche*, where I have stayed two or three times, the beds are a dream of comfort, especially after the Italian beds which in many hotels are severely monastic, but I do not advise any one to eat there. There is a restaurant, the *Chateaubriand*, where the food is worthy of the wines of the district. Beaune, too, is a delightful little town and the *Hôtel de la Poste* with its kindly old *patron* and its unique head waiter, Joseph, is one of the best types of old-fashioned comfortable French hotels. *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune* is, I think, far more interesting than the famous hospital at Padua. It was founded in 1443 by an adroit old ruffian, one Nicholas Rolin, whose conscience being uneasy owing to the very dubious means by which he had amassed his large fortune, wished, as he stated in the Deed of Gift—*par une heureuse transaction échanger contre les biens célestes les biens temporels*! What makes it so interesting is that, modernized without its character having been spoilt, it still serves as the hospital for the people of Beaune and its environs. The medieval pharmacy, the old cooking utensils, and the lovely rooms are in daily use. What a wonderful sense of beauty those medieval workmen had! To their buildings, furniture, ironwork, everything, indeed, to

which they put their hands, they gave a touch of grace and fantasy, the art of which seems to have been entirely lost in our ugly, modern, *soi-disant* civilization. Even the preambulating W.C.s used at the *Hotel-Dieu* in the fourteenth century are of beautiful decorated and glazed earthenware with carved handles !

The provincial French change very little ; they are, perhaps, the most conservative people in the world. You still see those bearded men dressed *pour la chasse* and looking exactly like an illustration from one of Guy de Maupassant's books. And they are as preoccupied with their women as ever. If you walk out in Italy you see nothing but men and the lovely Italian children. In England the women appear to be twice as numerous, but in France the two sexes form an intimate and equal partnership. In Beaune, a town of ten thousand inhabitants, there is only one cinema ; it opens only on Saturdays and Sundays, and neither in France nor in Italy did I hear the incessant noise of the wireless. In both countries I met a good many Germans, who one and all seemed to dislike cordially the present conditions in their own land and to dread having to return to it.

Well, travels, like everything else, come to an end. To everything there is a season—a time to be born and a time to die. I have had a good innings, and I have not the faintest desire to make my century.

“ Let me not live  
After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff  
Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses  
All but new things disdain.”

*All's Well that Ends Well !*